

## ALCOHOL *Prologue* Israel's Water Dilemma

Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation. To accurately interpret Scripture, we have to consider the syntax and lexicon of and the history and culture behind the text. There are times when even the sciences, such as geography, agriculture, botany, etc., can also be incredibly useful when trying to understand an author's intent. In the case of Israel's relationship with wine and the many passages referencing it, geography and climatology play a significant role in helping the modernist understand the intention, purpose, and significance of every appearance of wine in the Bible.

### THE CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY OF ISRAEL

In the time of the Exodus, it was literally easier to be a slave in Egypt than a freeperson in Canaan. Theologian and geographer Denis Baly observed in his classic work *The Geography of the Bible*,

*In Palestine, unlike Egypt as viewed through the Israelite eyes, there is absolutely nothing man can do to influence directly the source of his life. Egypt is wholly an irrigation culture, dependent upon an exotic river [the Nile] whereas Palestinian agriculture is rain-fed, even the limited irrigation of the wadi bottoms and hillside terraces being clearly related to the winter rainfall. (p. 70)*

Theologian, scholar, linguist, and explorer George Adam Smith observed of Israel<sup>1</sup>:

*In the Palestine year there is no inevitableness. Fertility does not spring forth from a source [like the Nile] which is within control of man's spade, and by which he can defy a brazen and illiberal heaven. It comes down from heaven, and if heaven sometimes withholds it, there is nothing else within man's reach to substitute for it. (p. 73)*

Stated another way, living in the Promised Land required total faith and dependence on God. Egyptians irrigated their crops by dragging their heel in the rich alluvial soil of the Nile delta. Or as Smith summarized it, the Nile delta was a place

*where everything is so much under man's control, where man has all nature at his foot like a little garden, where he has but to link himself to the mechanical processes of nature, and the fruits of the year are inevitable. (p. 74)*

Serving self allows us to be in control. Serving God means He is in control. God forewarned Israel as much before they entered the Promised Land.

- **For the land you are about to enter and take over is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you planted your seed and made irrigation ditches with your foot as in a vegetable garden. <sup>11</sup>Rather, the land you will soon take over is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain—<sup>12</sup>a land**

**that the LORD your God cares for. He watches over it through each season of the year!**  
**Deuteronomy 11:10-12 NLT**

God acknowledged that Israel was not defined by rivers. Instead, it was land defined by minor water sources.

- **For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams [brooks] and pools of water, with fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills.**  
**Deuteronomy 8:7 NLT**

Baly further observed:

*In the land of Canaan, which “drinks the rain from heaven,” man is absolutely helpless until the rain comes. But this rain is quite unreliable even in the settled and agricultural area.*

The premier promise of God’s provision concerning the Promised Land was concerning rain and agriculture.

- **If you carefully obey all the commands I am giving you today, and if you love the LORD your God and serve him with all your heart and soul, <sup>14</sup>then he will send the rains in their proper seasons—the early and late rains—so you can bring in your harvests of grain, new wine, and olive oil. <sup>15</sup>He will give you lush pastureland for your livestock, and you yourselves will have all you want to eat. <sup>16</sup>But be careful. Don’t let your heart be deceived so that you turn away from the LORD and serve and worship other gods. <sup>17</sup>If you do, the LORD’s anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and the ground will fail to produce its harvests. Then you will quickly die in that good land the LORD is giving you.**  
**Deuteronomy 11:13-17 NLT**  
**(cf. Leviticus 26:3-5; Deuteronomy 28:12)**

What did Elijah do as punishment against Israel when they violated this commandment by turning to other gods? He commanded no rain *or* dew for over three years. Israel’s climate has not changed since biblical times. Many of the same problems still hold true today. Examples of rain issues:

- Jerusalem averages 20-22 inches of rain per year. Most of which falls on 50 days between November and March. By comparison, London receives about 24 inches of rain with an average of 170 days of precipitation annually.
- Ancient Israel established villages and towns near springs and wells.
- Land with springs were of great value and the most desirable. (See **Deuteronomy 8:7; Joshua 15:13-19; Judges 1:11-15; Psalm 87:7; Isaiah 35:7.**)
- The threat of springs, wells, and wadis going dry or being poisoned was an ever-present reality. (See **1 Kings 17:7; 2 Kings 2:21; Job 5:6; Proverbs 25:26; Isaiah 58:11; Hosea 13:15.**)
- Cisterns were also dug out to capture rain during the winter months.
- The “**blood of the grape**” was another critical source of hydration.

## Rain

Daly notes that the ancient Hebrews possessed a “conscious recognition at the vintage season of the quite desperate need for water and the real danger of chaos and disorder if the rain did not come.”

- **If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, <sup>4</sup>I will send you the seasonal rains. The land will then yield its crops, and the trees of the field will produce their fruit. <sup>5</sup>Your threshing season will overlap with the grape harvest, and your grape harvest will overlap with the season of planting grain. You will eat your fill and live securely in your own land.**

**Leviticus 26:3-5 NLT**

- **Then [God] will send the rains in their proper seasons—the early and late rains—so you can bring in your harvests of grain [barley and wheat], new wine [grapes to be crushed], and olive oil.**

**Deuteronomy 11:14 NLT**

Living in Egypt didn’t require faith or obedience. The Promised Land was a promotion but also a test. If Israel served God, He would send the rain and they could eat, drink, and live. If Israel forsook God, the heaven’s would be brass, the rain would fail, and they would starve to death. The annual harvest of grain, grapes, and olives was a reminder of God’s faithfulness to them and a testimony that serving God was worth it.

## Dew

Here in the West, dew doesn’t mean much to us other than making the grass or car wet on a summer morning. For Israel, it meant life and death. That may sound like hyperbole, but it is a fact reflected in science and the scriptures. Case in point, dew is mentioned 37 times in 35 verses in the **KJV**.

In the summer months, the greater portion of Israel will have five continuous months of no rain (from late May to early October). In these months, the nightly dew is as important as the rains of the rainy season. Parts of southern, arid Israel can have as many as 250 nights of dew compared to 138 nights north near Haifa on the coast. Southern Israel’s dews range from 5.5 hours (July) to 9.7 hours (Dec.) of dew per night.<sup>2</sup> Dew accumulation has been measured as high as 0.5 mm. The book of Judges grants insight into the nature of an Israelite dew.

- **Then Gideon said to God, “If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, <sup>37</sup>prove it to me in this way. I will put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised.” <sup>38</sup>And that is just what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water.**

**Judges 6:36-38 NLT**

**\*\*Very rudimentary calculations: The average Bronze Age bowl could hold 1 to 2 L. We’ll assume the fleece was 4.5 sq. ft. (or 1.86 sq. m.). Average nightly dew accumulation in Israel is 0.5 mm. The fleece would have collected approximately 1 L of water.\*\***

Travelers have described the Israeli dew as “excessive,” with the results being, “on many mornings it looks as if there had been heavy rain.” (Smith, p. 65). Here are a few scriptures that associate Israel’s grape and other agricultural success with dew.

- **From the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth, may God always give you abundant harvests of grain and bountiful new wine.**  
Genesis 27:28 NLT
- **Moses said this about the tribes of Joseph: “May their land be blessed by the LORD with the precious gift of dew from the heavens and water from beneath the earth; <sup>14</sup>with the rich fruit that grows in the sun, and the rich harvest produced each month; <sup>15</sup>with the finest crops of the ancient mountains . . .**  
Deuteronomy 33:13-15a NLT
- **So Israel will live in safety, prosperous Jacob in security, in a land of grain and new wine, while the heavens drop down dew.**  
Deuteronomy 33:28 NLT

Grapes are especially dependent on the summer dew to experience *veraison*, the final stage of maturation when the berry swells and gains sugar (Daly, p. 86). Here are more verses that confirm the agricultural dependence on dew and the withholding of dew being a curse against agriculture.

- **O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor fruitful fields producing offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty heroes was defiled; the shield of Saul will no longer be anointed with oil.**  
2 Samuel 1:21 NLT
- **Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, “As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!”**  
1 Kings 17:1 NLT
- **For I am like a tree whose roots reach the water, whose branches are refreshed with the dew.**  
Job 29:19 NLT
- **It’s because of you that the heavens withhold the dew and the earth produces no crops.**  
Haggai 1:10 NLT

The point of this lesson is to demonstrate several points as related to alcohol in the Bible:

1. The Promised Land had/has an annual water shortage.
2. Ancient Israel was dependent on God to send the rain.
3. Their disobedience brought dearth, starvation, and death.
4. Their obedience opened the windows of heaven and as a result grain, oil, and wine.
5. Their annual vintage, or wine, was a reminder of God’s faithfulness, provision, and the ultimate fact that their obedience to God had allowed them to live another year.

## CONCLUSION

We should now be able to readily see why grape juice, and therefore wine, was so central to Israel's culture, lifestyle, worship, and celebrations. It stood as reminder of God's goodness. With that in mind, consider these final two verses:

- **You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine.** Psalm 4:7 NLT
- **You send rain on the mountains from your heavenly home, and you fill the earth with the fruit of your labor. <sup>14</sup>You cause grass to grow for the livestock and plants for people to use. You allow them to produce food from the earth—<sup>15</sup>wine to make them glad, olive oil to soothe their skin, and bread to give them strength.** Psalms 104:13-15 NLT

Selah!

## PROLOGUE REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Smith, George. *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*.

<sup>2</sup> Zangvil, Abraham. "Six years of dew observations in the Negev Desert, Israel." *Journal of Arid Environments*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1 Jan 1996), 361-371. Accessed August 1, 2025. <https://cris.bgu.ac.il/en/publications/six-years-of-dew-observations-in-the-negev-desert-israel>.

## ALCOHOL

### Lesson 1

### An Introduction To Alcohol In The Bible

Alcohol is a hot-button topic in the American Church. According to a new Barna report, practicing Christians drink alcohol (at least occasionally) at nearly the rate of the world: 60% to 67%, respectively. And nearly one-third of Americans have suffered an “alcohol-use disorder” at some point in their lives.<sup>1,2</sup> The shallow, modern pop-theology presently making the rounds is: drinking alcohol is ok so long as you don’t get drunk. This set of lessons will endeavor to examine alcohol from an exclusively biblical perspective, not from a cultural angle. However, cultural perspectives will be challenged in the face of the biblical text. This first lesson will simply aim to look at many of the generalized statements the Bible makes about alcohol. In essence, this will be a theological evaluation.

#### THE ABUNDANCE OF WINE

Wine appears 213 times in the King James Version of the Old Testament. Ancient Israel was long held in reputation for its wine production. Even ancient Egyptian writings described the land of Israel as “an excellent country . . . its wine was more plentiful than water.” Israel is not a land known for its water resources. This is because of its topography and climate. In short, water availability has always been an issue in the Promised Land.

- It is a land with limited rivers, and whose **“hills and valleys . . . drinketh water of the rain of heaven” (Deuteronomy 11:11)**. This is a reference to karst topography and sinking streams.
- Survival in ancient Israel was dependent upon water wells and cisterns to capture rain.
- In 2016, the Sea of Galilee (actually a lake) only contributed 10% of Israel’s drinking water needs.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2022, 86% of Israel’s drinking water came from desalination.
- As of 2025, the Jordan River is presently at only 3% of its original flow.
- Israel also recycles over 85% of its wastewater.<sup>4</sup>
- 90% of the annual rain in Israel falls in the winter (November - March), and mostly only in the north. Meaning, seven months out of the year there is no rain at all.<sup>5</sup>
- The country has never been able to rely on rain for all of their water. However, their yearly rainfall has always been sufficient to water their seven primary crops, including grapes.
  - **[God] will send the rains in their proper seasons—the early and late rains—so you can bring in your harvests of grain [barley and wheat], new wine [grapes to be crushed], and olive oil.**  
**Deuteronomy 11:14 NLT**
- It is from grapes that wine was made. Thus Israel had “wine more plentiful than water.”

#### VITICULTURE AND VINICULTURE

Viticulture and viniculture were central to ancient Israelite culture. This is seen in how many different (13) Hebrew words there are to describe grape juice products. Here are a few examples with how many times they are used in the KJV Bible in parentheses:



- **Yayin** (140x)—ordinary, fermented wine
  - The alcohol content of this wine varies from 3-4% up to 12%. By the time of the Roman era, most wine was diluted with water. The Romans also considered anyone who drank full-strength wine to be a barbarian.
- **Tîyrôwsh** (38x)—often translated as “new wine,” a.k.a. fresh must, rarely if ever fermented
  - In the KJV, this word usually appears in verses referencing agricultural blessings (e.g., “**increase of corn [wheat] and wine [grape juice] and oil**”). All three of these are the fruit of agriculture, while fermented wine is technically a product. While wheat is harvested and threshed, grapes and olives are harvested then crushed.
    - **The new wine [grape juice] is found in the cluster . . .**  
**Isaiah 65:8b**
- **Shêkâr** (23x)—strong drink; old powerful wine
- **Açîyç** (5x)—sweet wine, new pressed juice

## HISTORICAL USES

Wine was used for a great many things in the ancient world, several of which are recorded in the Bible.<sup>6</sup>

- As a libation offerings (**Leviticus 23:13**). With rainwater trapped in grapes, wine was obviously very valuable and thus a worthy sacrifice. (David also used water as a libation.)
- Wine was offered in conjunction with other offerings (**Numbers 15:5-10**).
- It was used to treat stomach ailments (**1 Timothy 5:23**).
- It was used as an antiseptic (**Luke 10:34**).
- It was used to treat water (**Isaiah 1:22**).
- It was used as a pickling medium for vegetables.
- Red wine was used as a clothing dye.
- It was the primary drink, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic.
  - Non-alcoholic wine (a.k.a. new wine) was often reconstituted from **d’bash** (translated as “**honey**” in KJV). **D’bash** was a fruit-juice syrup that had been boiled down for preservation. New wine (or fresh grape juice) was obviously preferred over reconstituted **d’bash**.

## THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF ALCOHOL

The first appearance of wine in the Bible concerns Noah and his post-deluge vineyard. This is also the first mention of drunkenness.

- **After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. <sup>23</sup>Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.**  
**Genesis 9:20-23 NLT**

From planting a vineyard to being able to drink wine would probably take no less than four to five years, maybe as long as seven or eight years. This is the first use of **yayin**, the Hebrew word for alcoholic wine. Sadly, Noah's debauchery tempted his son Ham to sin, which in turn resulted in Ham and his lineage being cursed. Not a good introduction to wine.

### THE SECOND APPEARANCE OF ALCOHOL (YAYIN)

The next appearance of wine or alcohol in the Bible is quite curious. It involves brazen Christ-typology.

- **After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). <sup>18</sup>And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. <sup>19</sup>Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.**  
**Genesis 14:17-20 NLT**

This is the first mention of a priestly order known as Melchizedek. He was a king/priest over the village that would grow to be Jerusalem. He initiated fellowship with Abram by bringing the patriarch bread and wine after his battle against Kedorlaomer. This is universally understood to be a foreshadow of Christ and the communion table. The presentation of these fellowship elements is followed by Melchizedek blessing Abram, then Abram tithing to the priest/king. This is a worship service and a type of the Last Supper and Communion.

### THE THIRD APPEARANCE OF ALCOHOL (YAYIN)

The third mention of wine in the Bible involves incestuous rape.

- **One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone else. And our father will soon be too old to have children. <sup>32</sup>Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father." <sup>33</sup>So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.**  
**Genesis 19:31-33 NLT**

I guess the family that drinks together . . . commits paternal incestuous rape together?

### THE FOURTH APPEARANCE OF ALCOHOL (YAYIN AND TÎYRÔWSH)

The fourth mention of alcoholic wine in the Bible is a neutral reference concerning a meal served by Jacob to his father Isaac. Isaac then mistakenly blesses Jacob, which included a blessing upon new wine (non-alcoholic grape juice).



- ... and he [the disguised Jacob] brought him [Isaac] wine, and he drank. ...  
<sup>28</sup>“Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn [wheat] and wine [crushed grapes].”

Genesis 27:25b, 28

Here, the blessing of God was pronounced upon two of the three primary crops: grain and grapes. As observed earlier, “**corn and wine**” and “**corn, wine, and oil**” are phrases repeated regularly in the OT that indicate provision and prosperity. Grain (wheat and barley), grapes, and olives were the three primary crops of Israel.

### THE FIFTH MAJOR APPEARANCE OF ALCOHOL (YAYIN)

Let’s skip ahead in the OT past the many sacrifice prescriptions of the Law and the ordinances of the Nazirite vow to an interesting passage:

- **For forty years I [Moses] led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out. You ate no bread and drank no wine or other alcoholic drink, but he [God] gave you food so you would know that he is the LORD your God.**

Deuteronomy 29:5-6 NLT

God had Israel fast alcohol for forty years? Not a bad idea.

### THE SIXTH MAJOR APPEARANCE OF ALCOHOL (YAYIN)

The final major story involving wine concerns barren Hannah and her desperate prayers for a son.

- **As she [Hannah] was praying to the LORD, Eli [the high priest] watched her. <sup>13</sup>Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking. <sup>14</sup>“Must you come here drunk?” he demanded. “Throw away your wine!” <sup>15</sup>“Oh no, sir!” she replied. “I haven’t been drinking wine or anything stronger. But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the LORD. <sup>16</sup>Don’t think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow.” <sup>17</sup>“In that case,” Eli said, “go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him.”**

1 Samuel 1:12-17 NLT

Drunkenness was not acceptable in the OT, especially in the Tabernacle. Eli believed Hannah’s silent prayer to be indicative of inebriation. The priest offered some great wisdom to the presumed alcoholic: **throw away your wine!** Her sobriety allowed the priest to bless her with peace (*shalom*) and invoke the fulfillment of her prayer request. I wonder if alcohol has ever served to hinder other peoples’ prayers.

As we might expect, the Bible has much more to say about alcohol.

## LESSON 1 REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Influence. "Majority of Americans Consume Alcohol." July 26, 2017. <https://influencemagazine.com/en/Theory/Majority-of-Americans-Consume-Alcohol>.

<sup>2</sup> Influence. "Christians Nearly as Likely as Non-Christians to Drink." October 23, 2017. <https://influencemagazine.com/theory/christians-nearly-as-likely-as-non-christians-to-drink>.

<sup>3</sup> Amit, Hagai. "מינדריה לש היעבל רפהנ תרנכה לש מודאה וקה." The Marker, June 10, 2016. <https://www.themarker.com/markerweek/2016-06-10/ty-article/0000017f-e234-d7b2-a77f-e337b1be0000>.

<sup>4</sup> [https://english.tau.ac.il/news/river\\_jordan](https://english.tau.ac.il/news/river_jordan)

<sup>5</sup> Durst, Phillip. "In Israel, It's All about Water." College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, February 20, 2020. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/in-israel-it-s-all-about-water>.

<sup>6</sup> Goor, Asaph, "The History of the Grape-Vine in the Holy Land." *Economic Botany* vol. 20, no. 1 (January 1966).

## ALCOHOL Lesson 2 JeSus TuRNed WAtER InTO WiNe—Part 1

Despite there being four gospels totaling 89 chapters that record the life and ministry of Jesus Christ the Son of God, there are only a few universally famous stories. For example, almost everyone knows about:

1. Christ's nativity because of Christmas. And we all love presents.
2. Everyone knows about Jesus walking on water because it's never been done before or since.
3. Everyone seems to know about Jesus multiplying fishes and loaves because we've all been in a long sermon and gotten hungry.
4. Also, the woman caught in the act of adultery and Jesus telling her accusers, "**He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.**" That story is useful to those who don't like to be judged, so it's familiar to everyone.
5. Then, thankfully the crucifixion and Resurrection are also well known (primarily due to Easter and this being the most important part of the whole Bible).
6. And of course, Jesus turning water into wine.

Why does everyone know this story? Might it be because they want a biblical justification to drink alcohol? Of course it is. Consider the selfish ignorance of mining the ministry of Jesus Christ just to find a reason to drink. In comparison, how many times do the gospels talk about Jesus . . .

- **Going to synagogue?**
  - No. of occurrences: Every Sabbath day, so countless.
  - Today's application: I can worship from home. I don't have to be like Jesus.
- **Healing the sick?**
  - No. of occurrences: Countless
  - Today's application: Well, you know, sometimes God's wants to teach you some things, and we don't believe in laying hands on the sick. I don't want to be like Jesus.
- **Casting out devils?**
  - No. of occurrences: Countless
  - Today's application: You mean demons are real? It's not just a mental illness? Well, even so a Christian can't have one, so . . . let's not talk about this, or be like Jesus.
- **Rebuking sin?**
  - No. of occurrences: Countless
  - Today's application: That's not very loving. It's not very loving to be like Jesus.
- **Raising the dead?**
  - No. of occurrences: 3 detailed accounts, many more alluded to.
  - Today's application: That's been done away with. Let's not be like Jesus.

- **Cleansing the Temple?**
  - No. of occurrences: 2. Once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end of His ministry.
  - Today's application: That's not very loving. Cleaning the House of God isn't very loving. Let's not be like Jesus.
- **Jesus turned water into wine?**
  - No. of occurrences: 1
  - Today's application: I think I want to be like Jesus. Let's go get a beer after worship practice and maybe do some Jägerbombs.

### THE NEED TO REEVALUATE

We desperately need to reevaluate this “**beginning of miracles.**” Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not record the Lord's first miracle. If it were not for John writing his gospel nearly 30 years after the others, we would have never known about it. That being said, do we really, really, **really** believe that the primary reasons the Holy Spirit of God moved upon the Apostle John near the end of his life to record in great detail the Lord's first miracle was so that:

- Loose Christians can have a margarita after church on Sunday?
- Or so the eccentric, self-imagined theologian can make beer in his bathtub (while smoking his pipe or cigar)?
- Or so the self-fancied, bougie believer can enjoy a Chardonnay with their pan-seared halibut?
- Or so the hipster pastor could relive his frat-days with a Natty Lite?
- Or so the modern worship leader can sit at the hotel bar after his/her worship concert and do whiskey shots?
- Really? Is this really why **JeSus TuRNeD WAtER InTO WiNe**?

### THE DETAILS OF CHRIST'S FIRST MIRACLE

John only recorded seven miracles. This is the first miracle. In essence, this miracle initiates the Lord's earthly ministry. That fact alone should inform us that there is more to this miracle than the promotion of recreational drinking. John's record (11 verses long) is incredibly detailed.

#### The characters of the story are:

- Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Jesus
- 6 disciples, as detailed in **John 1**. Jesus spends two days collecting these six disciples. The marriage occurs on the third day of John's gospel narrative.
  - Disciples #1, #2—**When John's two disciples [John and Andrew] heard this, they followed Jesus (John 1:35-39 NLT).**
  - Disciples #3 and #4—**He [Andrew] first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias . . . (John 1:40-43 KJV).**
    - “**First**” and “**own**” imply that there would be a “second” action and “another” brother, viz. John's brother James.
  - Disciple #5—**The next day . . . He [Jesus] found Philip and said to him, “Come, follow me.” (John 1:43-44 NLT)**
  - Disciple #6—**Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We**

**have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about!  
(John 1:45-51 NLT)**

- The first six disciples were: James, John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. These are they who were present at the wedding.
- The servants
- The headwaiter (master of ceremonies)
- The bridegroom (whose wedding it was)
- **And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: <sup>2</sup>And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. <sup>3</sup>And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. <sup>4</sup>Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. <sup>5</sup>His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. <sup>6</sup>And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins [20-30 gal] apiece. <sup>7</sup>Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. <sup>9</sup>When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, <sup>10</sup>And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. <sup>11</sup>This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. John 2:1-11**

#### **The other detailed elements of the story:**

- John only recorded seven miracles. This is first one.
- The first miracle took place in an obscure village—Cana of Galilee—not in the Temple in Jerusalem. Coincidentally, it is one of the few places in Israel with abundant water, e.g., near Galilee, in the uplands with cisterns, springs, and wells.
- This miracle took place at a wedding, not a funeral. This was a joyous celebration! No real need for a miracle-working Messiah at a wedding.
- The miracle was Mary's idea, not the Lord's. He answered her, **"What have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."**
- Jesus **"manifested forth His glory"** to a very small and select group of people, not to a massive audience or crowd. This included Mary, the six disciples, and the servants who drew out the water.
- The Messiah's first demonstration of the anointing created wine for a joyful celebration. It didn't heal the sick, cast out a demon, or raise the dead. This should also alert us to something more going on here.
- John recorded the events with incredible detail, e.g., 6 stone pots, or 2 to 3 firkins in volume, etc. (There would have been as much as 180 gallons of wine. This was a very large wedding party.)
- These were special purification pots for ceremonial cleansing, i.e., handwashing (cf. **Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3**). Coincidentally, there was one pot for each of the six disciples present at the miracle.
- Jesus didn't actually turn the water to wine. Neither did the disciples. The household servants' obedience to Jesus did as they drew out the water and carried it.

- The basic interpretation and purpose of the miracle is recorded directly by John: Jesus **“manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”**
- The disciples were the target audience. But might there be more?

### THE INTERPRETATION

- The miracle was an acted parable meant for the benefit of the six disciples present (arguably the most influential of the disciples). As with every parable, its meaning is shrouded in mystery, requiring study and meditation to interpret.
- There is a need, and a demand is placed upon Jesus to fill it.
- He uses those present to fill the need. God wants to use us to answer the needs of people. The servants are used. The baby disciples spectate.
- Like Mary said to the servants, **“Do whatever he tells you.”**
  - **Obedience is better than sacrifice.** **1 Samuel 15:22**
- There were six purification pots, one for each of the disciples.
  - **We have this treasure in earthen vessels.** **2 Corinthians 4:7**
- The pots were already purified and were used to purify the Jews, washing their hands, etc. The disciples would have been familiar with this fact.
  - **Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? . . . He that hath clean hands . . .** **Psalms 24:3a, 4a**
  - **That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.** **1 Thessalonians 4:4**
- Jesus commanded the pots to be filled with water.
  - **But be filled with the Spirit . . .** **Ephesians 5:18b**
- The filled pots had to then be drawn from. It wasn't enough to be filled; the infilling had to be acted upon.
  - **Therefore with joy ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.** **Isaiah 12:3**
  - **Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.** **John 4:15**
- As the servants bare the drawn water, it was turned to wine. Their obedience performed the miracle.
  - **Freely ye have received, freely give.** **Matthew 10:8b**
  - **O vain man, . . . faith without works is dead.** **James 2:20**
- The master of ceremonies was impressed with the **“best wine”** and praised the bridegroom, not the servants, for being so generous.

### THE WEDDING PATTERN APPLIED TO US

1. Whatever Jesus tells you to do—do it!
2. Be a purified vessel.
3. Fill yourself with pure water.
4. Draw out of the infilling you have been given.
5. Take what you have been given to those who are lacking.
6. Watch firsthand as God does a miracle to help those in need.
7. Watch Jesus, the bridegroom, get all the credit for His amazing grace and mercy in the lives of his people.

This application is just one of two interpretations. The second has an even more glorious, prophetic insight to the Church Age. Neither interpretation is meant to be an endorsement of carousing or addiction. Selah!



## ALCOHOL Lesson 3 JeSus TuRNeD WaTeR InTO WiNe—Part 2

- The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup>and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. <sup>3</sup>The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine." <sup>4</sup>"Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, <sup>8</sup>he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions. <sup>9</sup>When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. <sup>10</sup>"A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!" <sup>11</sup>This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.  
John 2:1-11 NLT

### THE WEDDING PATTERN APPLIED TO US

The miracle of turning water into wine at Cana of Galilee is an acted parable. In one interpretive application, it provides a pattern for how God wants to use believers.

1. Whatever Jesus tells you to do—do it!
2. Be a purified vessel.
3. Fill yourself with pure water.
4. Draw out of the infilling you have been given. (Like the Samaritan woman learned to draw water out of the well of salvation.)
5. Take what you have been given to those who lack it.
6. Watch firsthand as God does a miracle to help those in need.
7. Watch Jesus, the Bridegroom, get all the credit for His amazing grace and mercy.

### OLD TESTAMENT AND GOSPEL INTERPRETATION

Like all parables, allegories, and prophecies, there are multiple applications. What we have just observed is a pattern of how God uses His servants. However, there is another interpretation. This one involves a foretelling of the Messianic era and the Messianic expectations of the Jewish people of Christ's day. To understand what Jesus was doing, we must first understand some Jewish culture and theology.

### THE SETTING OF JOHN 2—A WEDDING

Both Jesus and John the Baptist often used wedding symbolism in their teachings. This is consistent with OT doctrine. (See **Isaiah 54:4-8; 62:4-8.**) In almost every case in the gospels, Jesus is the bridegroom.

- **“How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them?”**  
**Matthew 9:15 NIV**  
**See also Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35.**
- **The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.**  
**Matthew 22:2 NIV**
- 
- **At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.**  
**Matthew 25:1 NIV**
- **When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor . . .**  
**Luke 14:8a NIV**
- **The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine [John the Baptist], and it is now complete.**  
**John 3:29 NIV**  
**See also Luke 12:35-38 NIV.**

When combined, these passages establish that Jesus is the Bridegroom, His followers are the bride, there is a coming wedding, and John the Baptist was simply the friend of the groom. (Also, don’t ever choose the chief seats.) This is important because of the Messianic implications of Jewish wedding typology. In Talmudic thought, the wedding symbolizes the restoration of Jerusalem and reflects the relationship between God and His people (as Paul continued to teach in the NT). By the Second Temple Period, Israel had developed extensive wedding traditions. These were the traditions held in the time of Christ.

### **Wedding Traditions and Symbolism**

Jewish weddings had four traditional elements:

1. **Betrothal**—This took place in the home of the bride’s father. The groom would give the bride price to the father there, initiating the betrothal. At this time, the legal wedding document (***ketubah***) would be negotiated and signed. The contract would not be confirmed until its public reading at the actual wedding, traditionally held one year later.
2. **Sanctification**—Preparation for the wedding ceremony required bathing in a ***mikveh***, or ceremonial pool. She was then perfumed and adorned in fine clothing. Once completed, she was led to her groom’s house by family and friends with much fanfare and celebration (See **Jeremiah 16:9**). The groom would likewise go out to meet the bride and bring her to his house, where he would have built a ***huppâh***.
3. **Huppâh**—The decorated wedding canopy under which the ceremony took place. The couple would stand and read aloud their ***ketubah***, or wedding document. This symbolized her being joined to and abiding with him under his authority and provision.
4. **Ketubah**—This contract was originally agreed to and signed at the betrothal one year prior. This spelled out the terms and conditions of their covenant, e.g., divorce

price, marital roles and responsibilities, and polygamy prohibition. The reading of the **ketubah** legitimizes the covenant.

### Exodus Marriage Parallels

- **Betrothal**—Israel was betrothed to Yahweh in Egypt. “**And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God**” (Exodus 6:7a). The betrothal made the bride off-limits to all others. This can be seen in the initial Passover. A lamb was slaughtered, in a sense, a bride price purchasing Israel to Yahweh. Israel’s obedience to that initial command was her agreement to the terms of the **ketubah**.
- **Sanctification**—Israel’s sanctification can be seen in the symbolism of their passing through the Red Sea and then literally in Exodus 19:10-11, “**Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.**” “Sanctify them” is the Hebrew *qiddashtām* and is related to the word *qiddushin*, or wedding.

These two stages are confirmed in Ezekiel 16:8-9a NLT: “**So I wrapped my cloak around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows. I made a covenant with you, says the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. Then I bathed you . . .**” This is a reference to the early history of Israel. The wedding symbolism continues:

- **Huppâh**—God commanded Israel to come up to the mount, His mount, to meet with Him. As they began to draw near, He came down to meet with them. His glory became the type of **huppâh**, or canopy for their officiation. Under the glory canopy, Moses read the Law and Israel consented to it. “**All that the LORD hath spoken we will do**” (Exodus 19:8). The glory canopy was God’s home, and now it would be Israel’s home, too. Even with their wanderings, they still abode under the glory for 40 years, i.e., fire by night and cloud by day.
- **Ketubah**—The **ketubah** was fulfilled by the Law itself—the Torah. This was the covenant of God between Him and His people. The Law was reread every year to remind Israel of their covenant with their God.

The Exodus and the Giving of the Law as a metaphoric wedding is confirmed in Jeremiah 2:2 NLT: “**I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.**” The picture painted here is that *the Old Covenant began as a spiritual wedding, joining God and Israel*. We will come back to this point.

### THE PROTEST

“**Mine hour is not yet come.**” What did Jesus mean by that statement? He hadn’t even begun His ministry, but He was already thinking about the conclusion of it. The gospels reveal that “**the hour**” is a reference to the glorification of the Christ, i.e., His betrayal, death, burial, and resurrection.

- **Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.**  
**Matthew 26:45b**

- <sup>35</sup>And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. . . . <sup>41</sup>And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Mark 14:35, 41
- The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. John 12:23
- Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. John 17:1b

Understanding the Lord's statement, "**My hour is not yet come**," is key to interpreting the acted parable of the miracle because it shows us what Jesus was thinking about: the ratification of the New Covenant done by the cup of His blood, making possible the salvation of mankind. Which salvation sees its full culmination at a cosmic wedding—the Wedding of the Lamb (**Revelation 19:7-9**). In other words, *the New Covenant will be consummated at a wedding*.

### THE MIRACLE—SUPERNATURAL WINE

The Old Testament prophesied of supernatural wine when the Messianic age arrived, producing a cultural expectation to see such miracles. These verses use another word for wine—*acîyç*:

- In Jerusalem, the LORD of Heaven's Armies will spread a wonderful feast for all the people of the world. It will be a delicious banquet with clear, well-aged wine (*yayin*) and choice meat. . . . He will swallow up death forever! Isaiah 25:6, 8a NLT
- Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine (*yayin*) and milk without money and without cost. . . . <sup>3</sup>Come to me with your ears wide open. . . . I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David. Isaiah 55:1 NASB95, 3 NLT
- In that day the mountains will drip new wine (*acîyç*), and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias. Joel 3:18 NIV
- "In that day I will restore David's fallen shelter [Tabernacle]—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be," . . . <sup>13</sup>"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine (*acîyç*) will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, <sup>14</sup>and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. Amos 9:11, 13-14a NIV
- On that day the LORD their God will rescue his people, just as a shepherd rescues his sheep. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. <sup>17</sup>How wonderful and beautiful they will be! The young men will thrive

**on abundant grain, and the young women will flourish on new wine (tīyrôwsh).**  
**Zechariah 9:16-17 NLT**

Isaiah and Amos both spoke of David's covenant being renewed in the Messianic era. Amos prophesied that supernatural wine would signify the time of the restoration of David's Tabernacle. The Church Age being the time of David's Tabernacle was confirmed by the elders in **Acts 15:16**, when James quotes the prophet Amos. Generally speaking, the Old Testament frequently associates wine with joy and gladness (**Psalm 104:15; Zechariah 10:7**). The beginning of miracles was a partial fulfillment of these verses. The take away here is that Jesus, THE Messiah, initiated the Messianic age and the New Covenant at a wedding.

### THE MESSIANIC INTERPRETATION—GOD REPEATS HIMSELF

Symbolism	Old Testament Mt. Sinai	New Testament Wedding at Cana
Wedding ceremony	Spiritual	Literal
Time table	On the third day	On the third day
The Mediator	Moses the deliverer	Jesus—the deliverer that Moses prophesied about ( <b>Deuteronomy 18:18</b> )
	Significant infant story	Significant infant story
	Hunted as a baby	Hunted as a baby
	Moses drawn from the reeds	Jesus sent to the reeds (Cana)
Mother	Moses' mom perceived he was special and sent him into the reeds	Jesus' mom knew he was great and invited him into the reeds
Mikveh purification	Through Red Sea and at the base of Sinai	6 stone pots for washing
Huppah	The glory cloud on Mt. Sinai	Jesus "shewed forth His glory"
Ketubah	Moses read the Law to them	Jesus was the Word among them
Covenant	Initiating the Old	Initiating the New
Feast Typology	The first Pentecost	The foreshadow of new wine to come in <b>Acts 2, "when the day of Pentecost had fully come"</b>
Wine	No wine in the wilderness for 40 years ( <b>Deuteronomy 29:4-5</b> )	Endless new wine for the believer

To Summarize:

- God begins mankind with a wedding—Adam to Eve.
- The Old Covenant was confirmed at a spiritual wedding—God to Israel.
- The New Covenant was initiated at a natural wedding—Cana Wedding.
- The New Covenant will be consummated at a cosmic wedding—Christ to the Saints.

### **LITERAL APPLICATIONS TO ENSURE THEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY**

Should someone still want to use this miracle as an endorsement for their addiction, I propose the following theological considerations based on a literal interpretation:

*A Christian can drink, but only if . . . it's supernatural wine, converted from water, initiated by a woman named Mary, drawn from very large stone pots, by the service staff, at the instruction of Jesus, to signal the dawn of the Messianic Age.*

Order a Coke!

### **CONCLUSION**

Jesus turning water into wine is about as much an endorsement of social alcohol consumption as His crucifixion is an endorsement of body piercings or of climbing trees—you can do it if you want, but that wasn't the purpose of the divine event. Please dig a little deeper in your Bible study than the average seeker friendly addict. Selah!



## ALCOHOL Lesson 4 What The Bible Says About Alcohol

This lesson will evaluate many Bible verses concerning wine and alcohol. To be very clear, Israel did consume alcoholic wine. Any assessment contrariwise is ignorant. However, not all “wine” in the Bible was alcoholic. Some was simply grape juice. We must remember that wine was indicative of God’s kept promise to send the rain that would water Israel’s crops, providing grain and oil for bread to eat and grapes for wine to drink. If we assume the Bible views wine in the same way that we do (e.g., something to fellowship around, or to self-medicate or relax with), we will fail to see the significance of its constant appearance in the Old Testament.

In order to be honest and diligent in our study, we will look at the Bible-based pros and the cons of alcohol. Although wine (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) was very much a part of ancient Israel’s day-to-day life due to their severe water limitations (see Lesson 1) and was commanded to be part of their regular sacrifices, it is undeniable that the Bible presents a very negative view of drinking.

### PROS

Apart from the numerous commandments to give wine as a libation offering, which we must view in the positive (see **Leviticus 23:13; Numbers 15:5, 7, 10; 28:14**), and the casual reference to wine as the primary drink in Israel, there are really only a few positive mentions of alcoholic wine in the Bible.

- **You send rain on the mountains from your heavenly home, and you fill the earth with the fruit of your labor. <sup>14</sup>You [God] cause grass to grow for the livestock and plants for people to use. You allow them to produce food from the earth—<sup>15</sup>wine (*yayin*) to make them glad, olive oil to soothe their skin, and bread to give them strength.** Psalms 104:13-15 NLT

This psalm is clearly a reference to God’s divine hand of provision and fulfillment of the promise to always send the rain needful for Israel’s existence. **“Wine to make them glad”** in this context is more in line with the joy of ensured survival rather than drunken revelry.

- **“Draw me away with you and let us run together! Let the king bring me into his chambers.” (*The Chorus*) “We will rejoice and be glad in you; we will remember and extol your love more [sweet and fragrant] than wine. Rightly do they love you.” Song of Songs 1:4 AMP**

The poetry of Solomon’s Song of Songs incorporates the Israelite culture of spiced wine in its imagery. If wine was necessary for survival and spiced wine indicated an abundance of wine and provision, then likening the king’s romantic love to spiced wine would indicate how rich, beautiful, and necessary to life it was for the queen.

- **So go ahead. Eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God approves of this! <sup>8</sup>Wear fine clothes, with a splash of cologne! <sup>9</sup>Live happily with the woman you love . . . Ecclesiastes 9:7-9a NLT**

In contrast to the vanity and futility of the death that is coming for every person, Solomon's wisdom charges the listener to enjoy what God has given them: food, wine (again their primary drink), nice clothes to wear, cologne, and their spouse! These all come from God and it pleases Him for us to enjoy them, not abuse them.

- **I will strengthen Judah and save Israel . . . <sup>7</sup>The people of Israel will become like mighty warriors, and their hearts will be made happy as if by wine (yayin). Their children, too, will see it and be glad; their hearts will rejoice in the LORD. <sup>8</sup>When I whistle to them, they will come running, for I have redeemed them. From the few who are left, they will grow as numerous as they were before.**  
**Zechariah 10:6a, 7-8 NLT**

This eschatological passage foresees a time of God's mighty deliverance and restoration. Israel will be become like mighty warriors and their hearts will be made *happy*, not *drunk*. To interpret this passage as permission to get drunk is to miss the significance of the Lord's hand of deliverance: just like wine signified provision and survival in desperation, the Lord's appearance will make Israel just as happy. Not drunk.

- **Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.**  
**Matthew 15 :11**

This passage might be used to defend alcohol as “non-defiling.” However, the context is the Pharisetically taught spiritual defilement of eating with unwashed hands, not drinking alcohol. Alcohol was never considered an unclean food.

- **So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. <sup>17</sup>For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.**  
**Colossians 2:16-17 NLT**

This passage could certainly be used by those wishing to defend their alcohol consumption, except for the fact that verse 17 gives us the context Paul was addressing—Judaizer persecution. The Jewish factions present in Colosse were apparently endeavoring to bring the Colossian believers back under the dietetic injunctions of the Mosaic Law.

## CONS

Based on the average human's experience with alcohol, it should not surprise us that God's Word addresses the vast negative effects of alcohol and drunkenness.

- **Wine produces mockers; alcohol leads to brawls. Those led astray by drink cannot be wise.**  
**Proverbs 20:1 NLT**

This may be the strongest observation against wine and strong drink. It informs us that alcohol brings the worst out of people. It is also a clear condemnation of drunkenness which strips people of wisdom.

- **Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?**  
<sup>30</sup>**It is the one who spends long hours in taverns, trying out new drinks.**  
<sup>31</sup>**Don't gaze at the wine, seeing how red it is, how it sparkles in the cup, how smoothly it goes down.** <sup>32</sup>**For in the end it bites like a poisonous snake; it stings like a viper.** <sup>33</sup>**You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things.** <sup>34</sup>**You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast.** <sup>35</sup>**And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can look for another drink?"**  
**Proverbs 23:29-35 NLT**

The Book of Wisdom describes alcohol as biting like a venomous snake and stinging like a viper. This passage also provides a list of what alcohol can produce in a person's life:

• Anguish	• Bloodshot eyes
• Sorrow	• Hallucinations
• Fighting	• Crazy talk
• Complaining	• Staggered walking
• Unnecessary bruises	• Addiction

Solomon also relates the all-too-common drunken experience: a lost fight, a forgotten violent altercation, yet still eager to go drinking again the next day. (Yep, these sound like the very reasons Jesus turned water into wine.)

- **Give strong drink [as medicine] to him who is ready to pass away, and wine to him whose life is bitter.**  
**Proverbs 31:6 AMP**

Bathsheba's wisdom to her son Solomon included how the young king should view alcohol: Strong alcohol is for the dying, and wine is for embittered people. Are you dying or bitter of soul? The New Testament says if any man is afflicted, let him pray, or if any one is sick, let him call for the elders. (See **James 5:13-16**.)

- **Woe (judgment is coming) to those who rise early in the morning to pursue intoxicating drink, who stay up late in the night till wine inflames them!**  
<sup>12</sup>**They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine at their feasts; But they do not regard nor even pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, Nor do they consider the work of His hands.**  
**Isaiah 5:11-12 AMP**

This verse describes what we would call an alcoholic. Anyone who has to have a drink first thing in the morning is a chemical addict. Anyone who stays up all night drinking is either a carouser or also an alcoholic. These types of people love their music but never listen to God. They pay attention to the music at their parties, but they don't pay attention to the Word of God.

- **What sorrow for those who are heroes at drinking wine and boast about all the alcohol they can hold.**  
**Isaiah 5:22 NLT**

Bragging about how much one can drink is nothing new. Only a perverse culture makes heroes of those who can “hold their liquor.”

- **Now, however, Israel is led by drunks who reel with wine and stagger with alcohol. The priests and prophets stagger with alcohol and lose themselves in wine. They reel when they see visions and stagger as they render decisions. <sup>8</sup>Their tables are covered with vomit; filth is everywhere.**  
**Isaiah 28:7-8 NLT**

The downfall of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) occurred when their priests and prophets were consumed of alcohol. The prophets were drunk when they prophesied, and the priests were drunken when they adjudicated. The ultimate result was a filthy kingdom.

- **For the leaders of my people—the LORD’s watchmen, his shepherds—are blind and ignorant. They are like silent watchdogs that give no warning when the danger comes. They love to lie around, sleeping and dreaming. <sup>11</sup>Like greedy dogs, they are never satisfied. They are ignorant shepherds, all following their own path and intent on personal gain. <sup>12</sup>“Come,” they say, “let’s get some wine and have a party. Let’s all get drunk. Then tomorrow we’ll do it again and have an even bigger party!”**  
**Isaiah 56:10-12 NLT**

Isaiah issued a second condemnation of Israel’s leaders; this time it was against their pastors. The pastors’ affinity for alcohol and partying produced multiple sinful practices: laziness, daydreaming, greed, selfishness, and intent on personal gain.

- **Suppose a prophet full of lies would say to you, “I’ll preach to you the joys of wine and alcohol!” That’s just the kind of prophet you would like!**  
**Micah 2:11 NLT**

Micah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He is another witness to the role alcohol played in the downfall of God’s people. In Micah’s day it was the prophets who were drunken. As perverse as it may sound, the Judahites preferred the pro-alcohol prophets. In the end, Judah was doomed because of their incredibly unrighteous behavior, e.g., corrupt real estate practices, stealing from the poor, evicting widows, etc.

- **Do not get drunk with wine, for that is wickedness (*asōtía*) (corruption, stupidity), but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit and constantly guided by Him.**  
**Ephesians 5:18 AMP**

Paul used the word *asōtía* to describe drunkenness. *Asōtía* is a Greek word, meaning *profligacy, prodigality, dissipation, intemperance, and a dissolute life, or everything that is contrary to the spiritual fruit of self-control*. *Asōtía*, which literally means “unsavedness” (*a + sōzō*), is also used to describe “an abandoned man, one that cannot be saved.”

- **Don’t drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often.**  
**1 Timothy 5:23 NLT**

Oddly, Timothy had to be told to *start* drinking a “little” wine for a stomach ailment. This is unanimously agreed to be due to water quality issues. This verse affirms the historical dependency on wine as the only safe drink and the interpretation of wine as a drink that could be used to treat unpalatable or questionable water. So . . . unless your name is Timothy *and* you have stomach issues *and* zero access to safe water *and* the Apostle Paul commanded you personally to drink wine in a letter, order a Coke! Selah.

## ALCOHOL Lesson 5 Biblical Prohibitions To Alcohol

Israel's historical, existential dependence on wine cannot be overstated and must be reviewed again in this lesson. Due to the geographical (viz. karst topography, wadis, and deserts) and climatological (viz. Mediterranean and arid climates, and limited rainfall) setting of Israel, towns and villages grew around springs, wells, and cisterns. To subsidize the limited water resources, the Israelites were dependent on their grape harvest to produce juice that could then be stored long-term as either *d'bash* (concentrated syrup) or as wine (fermented grape juice). The alcoholic wine was used to treat questionable water, killing bacteria and improving flavor. Fermentation produced alcohol, which could be a blessing for health but also a curse if/when abused.

To summarize, the ancient Jewish cultural view and use of alcohol was very different from today's view (e.g., Bronze Age farmer vs. SEC frat bro). Back then wine was usually necessary for survival, and drunkenness was a risk of its overuse. Today, alcohol is not necessary for survival. Its consumption is a cultural commodity known for drunkenness, used as a depressant or self-medication. Even in its modern social settings, alcohol is associated with carnality.

### PROHIBITIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

It should be very eye-opening to us that even in a culture that was dependent on wine for hydration and survival, God still gave many prohibitions and warnings concerning alcohol.

- **Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, <sup>9</sup>“Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the Tent of Meeting, so that you will not die—it is a permanent statute throughout your generations—<sup>10</sup>and to make a distinction and recognize a difference between the holy (*sacred*) and the common (*profane*), and between the [ceremonially] unclean and the clean; <sup>11</sup>and you are to teach the Israelites all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.**

**Leviticus 10:8-11 AMP**

The Levites, God's ministers, were to live differently from God's people. They had to live a higher standard. This included abstaining from alcohol when on duty in the Tabernacle. This is a curious commandment because when it was given, Israel wouldn't have again wine for 40 more years. The purpose of this prohibition was to equip the Levites to teach the people the difference between holiness and profanity.

- **“Give the following instructions to the people of Israel, ‘If any of the people, either men or women, take the special vow of a Nazirite, setting themselves apart to the LORD in a special way, <sup>3</sup>they must give up wine and other alcoholic drinks. They must not use vinegar made from wine or from other alcoholic drinks, they must not drink fresh grape juice, and they must not eat grapes or raisins . . . <sup>8</sup>This requirement applies as long as they are set apart to the LORD.’”**

**Numbers 6:2-3, 8 NLT**



The Nazirite Vows were prescribed to Israel as an opportunity for the average person to be sanctified after the manner of the priests. It was a way for an Israelite to “**set themselves apart to the Lord in a special way**” when they wanted more of God or wanted to do more for God. Fasting wine, grape juice, grapes, and raisins was not only a harsh inconvenience, it also drastically limited caloric intake for the Israelite. Today, a non-drinking Christian is almost by default special because they are so rare.

- **Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. <sup>4</sup>So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. Judges 13:3b-4 NLT**

Samson’s mother was commanded to walk in a Nazirite vow as she prepared to conceive the child and then as she carried the child. She was being set apart to do something special for the Lord—carry a promised deliver. Doctors still recommend pregnant women not drink alcohol.

- **It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: <sup>5</sup>lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Proverbs 31:4-5**

Bathsheba gave her son Solomon (Lemuel) wisdom to ensure his success: Good leaders don’t drink because it will pervert their judgment. It opens the door to injustice. We will discuss this more in the next lesson. Alcohol perverts judgment.

## **PROHIBITIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Passing from Bronze Age Israel to the first century Roman Empire, alcohol was still a mainstay drink. Though regularly watered down, the dangers of overuse still existed.

- **Do not get drunk with wine, for that is wickedness (corruption, stupidity), but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit and constantly guided by Him. Ephesians 5:18 AMP**

Christians who defend their casual drinking by pointing out that the Paul only condemns drunkenness never seem to see the second part of this verse: “**be filled with the Holy Spirit and constantly guided by Him.**” Would to God Christians would be half as consumed with the second part of the verse as they are with the first part.

- **An overseer, then, must be . . . not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 1 Timothy 3:2a, 3 NASB95 (See also Titus 1:7.)**

Church leaders (and anybody who wants to be a leader) cannot be addicted to alcohol or any other type of life-controlling substance.

- **Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain. 1 Timothy 3:8 NASB95**

The same goes for the lowly deacon. They cannot be controlled by alcohol.

- **Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good.**

**Titus 2:3 NASB95**

Holy women, the so-called “church mothers,” must be free from the influence of alcohol. How else will they be able to teach what is good?

- **You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.**

**1 Peter 4:3 NLT**

Peter associates a lack of self-control with “**godless people**.” Godless people are defined by no temperance in sexual appetites (**lust**), food appetites (**feasting**), or alcohol appetites (**drunkenness and wild parties**). These should be things of our past now that we are new creatures in Christ with the fruit of self-control.

### **NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE**

Without question, the consumption of alcohol remains controversial in the church. However, one of the primary doctrines of the New Testament is selflessness. None of us live to ourselves and none of us will die to ourselves, so why fight for the right to drink alcohol if it is controversial? I have often heard it said, “So you say, ‘I can drink if I want to.’ Ok. Fine. So why do you want to?” We are called to *promote* the Gospel, not *hinder* it. If our consumption of alcohol hinders it, we are guilty of gross sin. If drinking alcohol causes another believer to sin, we will be in big trouble with God.

- **So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. <sup>32</sup>Don’t give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. <sup>33</sup>I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don’t just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.**

**1 Corinthians 10:31-33 NLT**

There are only three classifications of humans: Jews, Gentiles, and believers. Paul acknowledges that we can offend all three groups with food and drink. We are commanded to flee offense in all of their eyes.

- **We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.**

**2 Corinthians 6:3 NLT**

Can you say this of your drinking preferences? Does what you drink cause someone to stumble? We don’t have a right to hurt other people or hinder their walk with Christ. Jesus gave a horrifying warning for such scenarios.

- **But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in Me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck. <sup>43</sup>If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off . . .**

**Mark 9:42-43a NLT**

All three synoptic gospels record this warning. It is followed up with the mandate to excise the source of the offense. Whatever causes you to sin, cut it off!

- **For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.** Galatians 5:13 NLT

Our “freedom” in Christ is not a liberty to sin. We are still bound to the perfect Law of Love whereby we prefer one another and bear their burdens. Some will still choose to use their freedom to enslave themselves.

- **Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. <sup>21</sup>It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble.** Romans 14:20-21 NLT

Paul said it is better to abstain from anything that causes a brother or sister in Christ to stumble. We don't have a right to alcohol. We do have a right to serve Jesus by helping one another. Search the scriptures for *that* right, not your right to drink “a little red wine.”

- **I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** Jude 4 NLT

Jude offers a final warning to those who would want to use their freedom in Christ and the grace of God to live for themselves: Such a lifestyle is condemned. Order a Coke. Selah!

## ALCOHOL

### Lesson 6

### Quotes, Thoughts, Observations, And Counter-Arguments

Thus far, we have tried to look at the subject of alcohol from multiple Bible-based perspectives: historically, culturally, climatologically, ethically, theologically, and doctrinally. This lesson will be a smörgåsbord of everything else.

#### QUOTES

- *I have trouble believing that the same God that had to deliver me from alcohol gives you permission to drink it.*
- *Drunkenness is temporary suicide.*
- *Alcoholism secludes you.*
- *Strong people avoid alcohol. Weak people get addicted.*
- *The ugliest woman in the room will look like a supermodel after you get about 6 or 7 beers in ya' . . . Until you wake up the next morning and wonder, "My God, what have I done?"*
- *Alcohol will make you think you're Jackie Chan and have you jumping in the air doing karate kicks.*
- *The best way to avoid becoming an alcoholic is to not drink at all.*

#### THOUGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS

- The Lord's admonition, "**It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart,**" (Mark 7:15 NLT) must be kept in context and with the Lord's intended meaning. The context is ceremonial cleanliness and washing of hands. I do not believe drinking alcohol will make you ceremonially or spiritually unclean any more than taking morphine will. Ethanol is simply a chemical byproduct of fermentation. However, we don't support the recreational use of other addictive chemicals such as opiates. The motive and self-justification for alcohol is what can become problematic, to say nothing of the chemical dependency.
- Alcohol is by far unnecessary for our lives today, yet some people are convinced they can't live without it. This is called addiction.
- Drinking is incredibly expensive for a non-essential.
  - A fifth of liquor (750 ml) costs \$15-\$50. Coke is \$2 for a 2 liter. (\$8750 annum)
  - A six pack of beer costs \$8-\$15. Coke is \$3-\$5 per six pack. (\$2750 annum)
  - A bottle of wine (750 ml) costs about \$15-\$25. (\$5000 annum)
  - Restaurant mark-ups on alcohol are 200-400%.
  - How much money could abstaining save you?
- Pastors who drink *moderately* will have sheep who drink *excessively*. If you give an inch, they will take a mile. Ministers are to live the highest standard possible. That is the burden of leadership.

- **It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert judgment of any of the afflicted.**  
**Proverbs 31:4**
  - Bathsheba gave her son Solomon (Lemuel) wisdom to ensure his success: good leaders don't drink because it will pervert their judgment. Alcohol opens the door to injustice of all kinds.
  - **Wine has robbed my people of their understanding.**  
**Hosea 4:11 NLT**
- To that end, normalized social drinking only serves to make the Church look and act just like the world. The Church must be different from the world in every reasonable way possible.
- In a simple, unscientific survey I performed, over 95% of the tattooed Christians I polled said alcohol and/or drugs were active in their lives when they got tattooed. One person who wasn't drinking when they got a tattoo said, "I wasn't drinking, but my pastor was."
- In our culture, churches that begin to take an "all things in moderation" approach to alcohol soon become very carnal. It seems that a church's approach to alcohol acts as a gatekeeping doctrine to all other controversial vices. When the stance on alcohol is loosed, tattoos, weird piercings, coarse jesting, and sinful sex quickly follow.
- The teaching of "moderation" by many pastors is lexically unsupported by the Bible.
  - **"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."**  
**Philippians 4:5**
  - **"Moderation"** in this verse is the Greek *epieikés*, meaning *sweet reasonableness* and *mercy*. To apply this passage to alcohol is grossly ignorant. The modern translations render the passage as follows:
    - **Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. (NLT)**
    - **Let your gentleness be evident. (NIV)**
    - **Let your gentle spirit [your graciousness, unselfishness, mercy, tolerance, and patience] be known to all people. (AMP)**
- Why isn't moderation concerning food taught? "Drink but just don't get drunk" is espoused regularly. Will the same people just as eagerly promote, "Eat, just don't get obese"?
  - Encouraging the recreational use of a controlled chemical seems odd. Is pot next?
  - To that end, I believe any pastor who teaches in favor of alcohol but not against obesity is setting members of his church up for an early and painful death.
- Any pastor that promotes "moderation" will risk condemning a percentage of his congregation to alcoholism and all of its ensuing destruction.
- Substance possesses an essence. For example, an empty house feels differently than does a house full of furniture. And a cluttered hoarder's house has a different

spirit than does a house decorated with a minimalist taste. That being said, a bookshelf full of assorted liquors will have a different vibe than would the same bookshelf if it was filled with children's books or a Bible collection. That alone speaks to the literal "spiritual essence" of alcohol.

- Once again, alcohol is completely and totally unnecessary for a modern human being's day-to-day existence. If it were prescribed for some strange reason medicinally, then I would personally view it as a drug like morphine, oxycodone, Percocet, or diazepam.
- DUI offenders are the most violent inmates upon intake at our local county jail.
- I do not personally know a casual drinking Christian that I would deem spiritually mature or anointed.

### **ARGUMENTS DEBUNKED**

Christians who defend drinking usually offer one or two of the following defenses. The list below excludes numerous scriptural arguments since this entire curriculum has adequately covered those.

**Argument:** Drinking is no big deal.

**Counter:** Please reread the last 5 lessons.

**Argument:** Drinking is just part of our culture.

**Counter:** Every culture has its sinful traditions. We've been given the Kingdom's culture. Time to change your culture.

**Argument:** I can't have fun without it.

**Counter:** Fun is not a human right. Serving Jesus and living a life above reproach is a divine commandment. Also, explore other things in life. If alcohol makes something fun, it probably wasn't fun to begin with.

**Argument:** I drink wine because it's good for my heart.

**Counter:** So is a good diet and exercise. Plus a treadmill won't cause a Christian to sin.

**Argument:** I'm free to drink.

**Counter:** Maybe, but you're still not free to cause others to stumble. Don't forget, "use not your freedom as an occasion for the flesh."

**Argument:** You need to loosen up. You're legalistic.

**Counter:** And you already make bad decisions while sober. Plus, being loose was sending me to hell. And it will do the same to you.

**Argument:** Alcohol doesn't really affect me.

**Counter:** You may already be a high-functioning alcoholic.

**Argument:** I'm not hurting anybody.

**Counter:** Perhaps not, but do you live to help anybody beside yourself?



**Argument:** I need it to help unwind in the evening.

**Counter:** Have you tried Jesus? He's the Prince of Peace.

**Argument:** I need it to help calm my nerves.

**Counter:** Have you tried Jesus? He's the Prince of Peace.

**Argument:** It's a great way to fellowship and socialize.

**Counter:** So are food and sports. People who fellowship around alcohol are carnal.

The ultimate question in the alcohol discussion should be, "Are we living in such a way as to help people make Heaven, or are we living for self?"

- **Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** **1 Corinthians 10:31 NKJV**

If we can't glorify God by drinking alcohol, order a Coke. Amen!

## **ALCOHOL**

### **Lesson 7**

### **Testimonies**

#### **POSITIVE TESTIMONIES**

1. Seldom use it but we do enjoy it on company visits.
2. My parents were social drinkers . . . The occasional party . . . I've never really liked alcohol and neither have my siblings.
3. Alcohol has had very little effect on our family. We have only ever drunk one very tiny glass of red wine with dinner a handful of times throughout the years or cooked with it. In both our extended families, no one drinks, or either drinks a very small amount of wine, with dinner occasionally. I have never noticed an ill effect.
4. Alcohol was never in our home and never allowed at family gatherings. We were warned of the dangers of alcohol as children. Today, none of the grown siblings use alcohol, therefore, no divorces, no tattoos, no alcohol-related disease, no jail time, no child abuse.

#### **NEGATIVE TESTIMONIES**

5. We don't drink alcohol, but I have in the past. I felt pressured by older family members to drink wine with dinner and eventually gave in. This led to some stronger alcohol in some social settings with work friends, but I never got drunk. I would buy some wine to cook with and would sometimes have a glass of wine because it was in the house, but I never drank beer and never developed a habit of drinking. It just dried up; the desire never stuck.
6. Alcohol has done a lot to my family. The first instance I remember was being a child, and there was always a bottle of liquor and Bud Light around my grandpa. He stayed belligerent. Most of the time he was a yeller and he threw things. He loved us very much, but he definitely had a problem. My dad was never really a drinker nor my mom to my knowledge, but I know stories of my dad getting drunk. By the time I made the decision that I was not gonna serve God and sin, alcohol was just a normal choice and for 14 years I drank alcohol often, socially and privately. I have given myself away while intoxicated. I've made horrible choices to drive while inebriated. My marriage and my parenting suffered due to alcohol and drug use. I was so drunk one point, I prayed that my son would not wake up because I was so drunk I couldn't take care of him. I've been subjected to violence because of alcohol and taken advantage of because of alcohol. I even have family right now dependent on it. It is not worth buying and consuming. It's broken apart family connections and marriages.
7. Alcohol in my family is generational, and I have many addicts in my family tree. One significant experience was being a designated driver for my mom. Her friends and her talked about dirty, sexual things all night. They pressured my friend to try to drink more, but I told her she absolutely did not have to do anything they said. They even bought her another drink and set it in front of her. The night ended with my mom wetting herself, me driving her home with her passed out in the back seat, me

telling my dad to go out to the car to get her, and that I would never do that again. I was 18 years old. All of my family drinks to excess, and it never comes to any good.

- 8.** First and only time I tried wine—instant headache/migraine. My dad's parents are mean drunks. I loved going to see them until I was old enough to realize that the moment they started drinking wine or beer they became cruel and nasty to my parents, and as we got older, to us kids, too. I started hating being around them, especially my grandfather. He was absolutely brutal and his hatred for our lifestyle of following after Jesus was the center of his anger. It was like he was mad at us for his sin. He was cruel to my mom and then dad would step in to take the brunt of it. When my brothers and I got old enough, that anger turned to us kids. All we could do was finish our meal, clean up, and walk to a different area of the house. My grandmother, after years of the verbal abuse, finally started catching him, but she was just as bad when she'd had too much. So grateful when mom and dad put their foot down and said no alcohol in their house, especially when they would come over.
- 9.** Alcohol played a big part in destroying my marriage. My ex started drinking in moderation early on after we were married, but it quickly (without my knowledge) grew to excessive drinking in secret. Being drunk is what she blamed the cheating on. She was unwilling to quit drinking even though that's what "caused" the cheating to take place.
- 10.** After my parents divorced, my mother married a man who was an alcoholic. He was a seemingly decent man to begin with, but that didn't last. They were married for 5 years. In that time, we lived in a couple of different homes that he put his fist through when he was drunk and angry. He used to carry a bull whip but thankfully only threatened with it. When my mother served papers on him, he said some day he would come back and burn the house down. He told me one time I wouldn't live past 35. I was only 6 when they married, and my mom got rid of him when I was 11. I was always afraid.
- 11.** I have used alcohol acceptance/usage among my friends and family to gauge how much, if any, fellowship I have with them. It's an instant marker for me to gauge their depth of walk with Jesus. The fervent Christians we know don't drink alcohol. Full stop.
- 12.** My dad was an alcoholic growing up. He wasn't physically abusive, but he would lose his temper a lot and said cruel things. In college I drank a bit and one time I made a very questionable decision physically that I still feel shame over 20+ years later. Until recently, my husband drank occasionally, and when he did, he overdid it. It made me worry, and I just didn't like how he was when he drank even though he wasn't angry or abusive in any way.
- 13.** The worst part of my life was when I had backslidden and got involved with drinking and people that drank as well. During that time I had a girlfriend that was an alcoholic, and it was bad (very moody and she trusted no one . . . including me). I had no peace/joy during that time. There was always some drama and turmoil going on. These people had no respect for others and just seemed to want to party all the time. I was so glad to get out of that mess by repenting to God, leaving that lifestyle along with those people, and going to church again.

- 14.** Both sides of my family (maternal and paternal) have been negatively impacted by alcoholism, largely because they weren't born again. My father was a womanizer and drunkard who never wanted to be a father . . . his own father being a raging, angry alcoholic. My mother was molested by her drunken father when she was young, leading her into multiple failed marriages and difficulty raising two boys as a single mother. These produced serious precipitous effects on my brother and me, from which we both have had to be delivered by the power of God. Both my brother and I came to the place where consuming alcohol was never an option, nor did we permit it into our respective homes.
- 15.** My sister's daughter started drinking in high school and college. She became an alcoholic and was sent to rehab, which she ended up leaving early and stayed with my mom. She started going to AA, helped mom and dad cook and clean, and eventually she had not had a drink in a year or so. As she seemed well, she went to live with her parents and had a job at a grocery store, reconnected with her boyfriend, and became engaged with a condition that she would never drink again. Her fiancé is a lieutenant in the Marines and one day he picked her up, she grabbed her backpack and out fell a bottle of wine. He then proceeded to tell her that it was over with them and ended up leaving. He called my sister and let her know what happened and said he was very concerned. My sister ran into the house only to see my niece lift up a gun and shoot herself. Of course this is devastating. She was a beautiful 21-year-old trapped by the effects of alcohol.
- 16.** Thankfully, I did not have alcohol in my immediate family, and I knew of its casual "cookout" use in my extended family. I have one memory of my paternal grandfather, who died of lung cancer from smoking, and that is of him sitting in an upstairs hallway holding a beer can as I greeted him and he stared at me, looking as if he was unsure about who I was. I'm very grateful to not have had alcohol framed for me as an inhibitor as a child. I was disinterested in it in college, where I saw it make people lose sound judgement. With all of the advertisements and everything else vying for space in your mind, I disdained the idea of yielding mental control and dishonoring my responsibility of stewardship.
- 17.** My dad was an alcoholic. It destroyed his marriage, his family, and his health. He died at the early age of 59 due to the health issues from years of drinking.
- 18.** Alcohol caused me to lose my virginity.  
Alcohol caused me to embarrass myself.  
Alcohol caused me to dishonor my God.  
Alcohol brought death to my finances.  
Alcohol caused high blood pressure.  
Alcohol caused me to show my body.  
Alcohol caused me to believe it was my joy.
- 19.** Alcohol once completely controlled my life and on multiple occasions almost took me out. I would wake up after a night of drinking—which was almost every night during this time of my life—and have no clue where I was or how I got there. I would find myself in dark alleys, trash bins, total strangers' houses, jail, the woods, car wrecks, etc. Physically, I lost several of my teeth one night and woke up not knowing how they were knocked out of my mouth. I have woken up with multiple wounds, scratches, and broken bones after drinking. I sold my body and slept with

multiple different people while drunk, violating my body. Alcohol made me numb to everyone and everything, and it drove my every action. This meant hurting everyone around me that I ever cared for and losing everything I had ever worked for. Alcohol alters your state of mind to the point of bringing yourself to destruction and death. After being addicted to it for a few years, I am 100% convinced there is nothing good about alcohol and it only leads to death. If I had drunk alcohol any longer, I am sure I would not have made it out alive. Everyone around me in my family or friends that have ever drunk alcohol have similar experiences. Unfortunately, I know multiple people who died as an alcoholic.

- 20.** I was exposed to alcohol at age 10. That was the first time I was ever truly under the influence. It became my identity. From a young age I watched my family get drunk and fight with each other. Sometimes weapons were involved, sometimes not. My parents saw no issue with my drinking until it had already spiraled to a dangerous level. I remember going to a funeral of a friend whose mother had just passed away from a deadly combination of alcohol and prescription drugs. I insisted after the funeral we all have margaritas at the Mexican restaurant. Little did I know how impactful that would be to their family. I was selfish and addicted. How many nights I put my life and others' lives at risk to drive home drunk. It's truly a miracle I never hurt anyone or myself. My whole life revolved around my identity in the bar life. How many nights I went home with random people, never expecting to get hurt or anything bad to happen. I eventually lost all mental connection. I would hurt others. Hurt myself. So many nights I would go home sick and vomiting just to wake up the next day and do it all over again. One night I was so distraught and drunk, I was running around my apartment fully naked screaming at the top of my lungs and had the cops called on me because someone thought I was being hurt. They took me to the hospital. I was combative and fighting all the nurses and doctors to the point I had to be manually restrained. I eventually fought so hard to get out of the restraints that they had to medically tranquilize me. I was so full of alcohol and adrenaline that it took over an hour (or what felt like that for me) to eventually go out. I was at a party one night drunk and high on drugs, went to the bathroom, came out, and someone had been stabbed. We all left, knowing how intoxicated we were, just to avoid speaking to the cops. Eventually my family separated themselves from me. Took my vehicle. I had to walk to work and ride a bike where I could. Truly that was the smartest thing for me at the time. My alcoholism caused so much strain between my family and friends, put me in dangerous situations, and cost me more than I can probably fathom at this point. I advocate strongly for no alcohol no matter how much self-control you have. This is just scratching the surface of things that have happened to me and my family due to my drinking and theirs. It's a miracle I'm sober, and don't kid yourself. The devil comes back knocking, and without Jesus, I would be back in that hole today, no matter what value was on my life. It only takes one drink to send you down a path you never wanted to be on. You may think it's fun, but it's dangerous and only a matter of time before it begins to destroy something in your life.
- 21.** My husband was an alcoholic when we first got married. First he wrecked his motorcycle. The second wreck totaled his vehicle and put a girl in the hospital for about 3 months as I remember. He finally was in the foyer of church praying one night at a prayer service. He prayed to be delivered; he was instantly delivered and



has never relapsed! He wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole now, and that was 40 years ago!

- 22.** While not as awful as some others' testimonies about alcohol I'm sure . . . alcohol has divided my natural family, especially on my mom's side. Everyone drinks and they tend to fellowship around their common love of alcohol (different whiskies, different mixed drinks, their new favorite local brewery) . . . oh and they all claim to be Christians of some form or another. Their affinity for alcohol makes getting together as a big "Christian" family nigh impossible. When I was very young, all of my extended family was OK with abstaining from drinking while we had holiday get togethers but eventually they didn't like that. So now it's just me and my parents and my sister and our beloved church family at holidays. One uncle has been divorced twice (and is about to get married again), one aunt divorced once and very unstable now, many of my cousins are apostate, others lukewarm at best. My grandparents were OK with drinking when they were alive (although I really just remember it being beer, nothing hard, so pretty moderate in the world's terms). I can't help but wonder if my grandparents didn't drink or endorse it either (and then my aunts and uncles, too) how different things could have been.
- 23.** This isn't a story of how alcohol ruined my life but . . . my best friend at the end of high school rededicated his life to the Lord at the end of his junior year. He was ON FIRE those first few months after he rededicated. He called me one day that summer very conflicted. He had a huge stash of alcohol that he had spent a lot of money on but also knew that he couldn't keep it anymore because he had repented and stopped drinking. I had just graduated high school myself and didn't know what to tell him. But the Holy Spirit helped me out! I was able to remember the story of David pouring out the water as an offering so that's what I recommended he do and that God would see it as an offering, too. He told me later that week that he had poured out all of his alcohol. He hasn't turned back from serving God since! For him, alcohol was a reminder of sin, debauchery, darkness, depression, and living a compromised life as a teenage Christian. This season of repentance also included leaving his lukewarm church where he described the youth group as being similar to a nightclub.
- 24.** As a child in my parent's home, drinking was a social activity. I have no memory of tasting alcohol for the first time because it was always there in social activities—beer and hard liquor. I think I got drunk for the first time at 10. As a girl, I matured young (physically), so that was a problem itself. Add alcohol to that and it's easy to see that alcohol led to me acting much "older" than my age. By the age of 12, I'd lost my virginity and that led to more "partying." It wasn't unusual to hear my sister (7 years older than me) come in after a binge and fall down the stairs to her room in the basement. Arguments were loud, and painful words often exchanged during those intoxicated times. My sister and my dad fought constantly, and it was ugly. I saw an uncle almost lose his life to alcohol with liver failure. I saw friends injured; accidents happen while driving under the influence—almost losing my own life in an accident that happened when I was drunk. When I was a freshman in high school, I got invited to ride around with the popular kids. Alcohol was part of that "ride." It wasn't long before the girls who'd been with us disappeared, and I was left alone with the boys. They would take me home saying my "pay" to be part of the night and partying was to "pay up." That night of partying led to a "gang bang."



It didn't matter if I didn't want to. That experience led me to stay with just one person—but alcohol was ever present and eventually other drugs were introduced. I'm thankful I never used needles, but what I did under the influence of alcohol and eventually the drugs still cause me to cringe today, long after being born again and living for Jesus. I experienced other physical abuse using alcohol—being punched in the face by my boyfriend while we were both drunk. (What is fun or loving about any of that?) As a believer in my early 20s, no one really addressed alcohol. They were more likely to tell us the baby dolls our kids were playing with were demonic than to address booze. There was a “knowing” inside (I'm sure it was the Holy Ghost) that alcohol wasn't right—my own experiences taught me that, too. For many years, we limited ourselves to a glass of wine at a meal or a wine cooler with the folks. It never felt right—just felt like the old “me” I didn't want to be. It's been many years since family has even offered a glass of wine to me, and I'm thankful they finally accept I don't drink AND that I don't drink because I don't want to dishonor my God or be a stumbling block to anyone. What has alcohol done for me and my family? Nothing but cause pain. Numbed me to hurt and caused me to hurt others or be hurt more myself. I see no benefit, especially today when it's so often abused and flaunted, such a part of base behavior in the world (and now the church). Jesus came to set us free, not put us back into bondage with substance abuse. It truly was like a millstone around my neck, dragging me to the bottom of the lake. I'm thankful not to go back there.

**25. In no order, it cost me:**

- Time
- Lots of money
- I got blackout drunk every time, so loss of self-control
- Made me very depressed
- Attributed to me being a whore
- Ripping a piece of trim off my wall
- Pooping on the floor
- One time I stripped down and thought I was on fire like the movie Talladega Nights when I wasn't and did a figure 8 pattern.
- I belly danced for some girls.
- I also would randomly scream like a banshee.
- Me and my uncle's marriage got ruined in part by it.
- Didn't help with my family being close at all since we got in fights a lot.
- I had my first drink at 7 and never knew restraint.
- So alcohol, bad.

**26. Growing up, I thought everything in my family was perfect and that I had a normal family. Now, as an adult, I look back and see how things were. When I was about 10 years old, I found alcohol in a garage refrigerator. I brought it to my mom, and she quickly made an excuse, saying it was not hers and definitely not my dad's, and that I didn't need to ask him. I took her word for it and didn't think about it again. Again, looking back, I can see just how much my mom was hiding with men, alcohol, cigarettes, scratch-off tickets, etc. These addictions had such a hold on my mom that you could not talk any sense to her. She didn't see the big deal and would justify every action she took. After high school, I had the choice to either follow in her footsteps or become a genuine Christian. When I confronted her on issues,**

we would have yelling matches that didn't accomplish anything. I decided to move out; our relationship didn't last much after that, and now we have no relationship. Her addictions have caused her to lose her adult children one by one. She now lives alone with no one around her in her old age. I am not sure if it started with alcohol, but it was one of the things that helped bring our family to ruin. Alcohol has affected me and my siblings. My sister had to go to the hospital due to being drunk and was in an accident. I started drinking and smoking when I was 10 years old. Most of the time, you do not just do "one thing;" if you drink, you smoke, or you sleep around, or do drugs, or all of the above! I put myself in so many questionable places. It wasn't until I had a life-altering event in my family that caused me to wake up and start living for God.

27. For me personally, I grew up in a "moderation" household. My parents didn't frequently drink to excess, but on occasion my mom would have to "cut my dad off." I can't remember much ever coming from it, other than the great sense of hypocrisy it gave all us kids who were told not to drink while watching our parents drink every weekend. Turns out "Do as I say, not as I do" didn't work for any of us kids . . . but even when you got caught with booze, not much ever came from it other than Dad would invite his buddies over to the house to drink all your booze they confiscated, while reminding me that "You shouldn't drink" (unless of course they gave it to you for a special occasion like Christmas, birthdays, thanksgiving, the sun was shining, they were happy that day, etc etc . . .). When I joined Cookeville Christian Fellowship, I was regularly buying alcohol from my older siblings. And hiding it in various stashes . . . kinda like Otis from Andy Griffith. But to God's glory, after I rededicated my life, the desire to drink just went away! I suppose it was a Jericho moment for me because the rest of my sins . . . well, they put up a battle to get them out of my life.
28. When I was younger just starting out, we drank pretty much most of the time, and when I got married, we still drank pretty much every weekend at a club. I am still not sure everything that happened during that time, between myself and others and between my wife and others. We would buy a quart of Jack Daniels and finish it that night and then drive home. After around 20 years later, I found out that two of my friends had supposedly had sex with my wife, not sure if it was consensual or not! I finally stopped drinking altogether because I could see what it was doing to us. After all this, there was never any trust left; it separated a lot. Years later I look back and wonder what we were thinking. I have not drunk in over 40 years now. And will never go back. It is a demon. Thank our God He preserved me.
29. I was blessed to be raised in an environment that did not use alcohol or tobacco. There have been two instances where I have had alcohol in my mouth. 1st—At a family gathering, a broil was being made with beer. Tasted it and thought it to be disgusting. 2nd—An experience in college that taught me a lifelong lesson. My freshman spring quarter, several of the guys on my dorm floor organized a weekend at a cabin at Edgar Evins state park. There was alcohol everywhere, but I had had no interest in it and was well outspoken that I was not participating in that. We needed to make a run to the local market, and I was elected to drive as being the only one sober (supposedly) there. However while driving, it became very apparent that I did not have control of my faculties as I should, even to the point of being concerned that I would not wreck. I realized that someone had spiked one of

my sodas somewhere along the line. No one ever owned up to it, and I concluded that these were people who did not really care about me. This incident cemented a) how dangerous alcohol could be and b) I have to be really careful about where and who I allow myself to fellowship with.

- 30.** My dad (Dieter) was born in Germany and came to the US when he was 8. From what I'm told, culturally Germans drink when they're kids, so it was apparently always a part of my dad's life. He was 31 years old when I was born, and he was a very social person in general, loved by everyone for being so "fun." And he was. That was Dietz. And I have vivid memories of our family holidays in my aunt's basement with the whole German family, and they were wild. All his siblings were 14+ years older and always drinking. Mind you, at family parties, it was happy . . . the prototypical German's sitting at the bar, singing loudly in German, swinging around literal beer steins . . . concluding with ZIGGY ZOGGY ZIGGY ZOGGY HOI HOI HOI! I actually have very fond memories of those family parties as a kid. Everyone was always having such a good time. As I think back now, I couldn't have even comprehended the damage that was doing to our family in those young years of my life, but it did create "my normal." So . . . enter my mom into that background of my dad, a bit of a wild child (as I'm told by my aunt & some family friends since she's passed away) and a very emotionally weak person who used alcohol to dull her emotional pain (from what, I still don't know). I can remember as young as 10 years old, after we moved to the suburbs, my parents both drunk, yelling, and fighting with each other on a fairly regular basis. As a kid, I didn't think anything of it . . . it was just "my normal." In 1997, I was 16 and in the middle of high school, and my mom was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, and that only accentuated the alcoholism (somewhat understandably so). She was already emotionally fragile and an alcoholic (so was my dad), but that disease sent her down a spiral of depression, prescription drugs, and more alcohol. Maybe 1 to 2 years after her MS diagnosis, she lost her ability to walk and became wheelchair bound. Naturally, she could no longer drive, so she couldn't go buy alcohol anymore. It was OK though—my dad always had plenty, but once she started drinking herself to blackout, even my dad cut her off. No worries though! For a while, she tricked my dad into getting her Scope mouthwash because it had a small amount of alcohol in it. I can't count how many times I would come home from high school and find my mom passed out, blackout drunk . . . oftentimes on the toilet, sometimes naked, sometimes with her cigarettes burning holes in her shirt, sometimes all of the above. I can still smell her room. It was just insane. But that was "my normal." Over the years, my mom was in and out of rehab for the drinking, but it never worked long term, and the MS just made it that much worse. I couldn't even imagine the depression she must have been going through, but being in high school, I was very much dealing with my own emotional navigation, so I don't really know what I thought about it at the time. It was just my life. It was "my normal," and I found music and alcohol as my own escape from it. Today, I can think back and understand that my coping mechanism was just to play it off, make excuses for my otherwise very loving parents (we were spoiled rotten, and they loved us well . . . and everyone else loved them), become an "emotional stuffer" towards it all, and just move along controlling what I could control. Hence, my severe control problem to this day. Later in life, after I told my wife one time too many that I had a very loving family life and what I experienced was "not traumatic" simply because they loved us, got us whatever we ever wanted, and

took us on nice vacations, I saw a Christian counselor who helped me realize that it was most definitely trauma, even though I tried to cope with it by pretending like it was normal. My counselor introduced me to the concept of “emotional abandonment” and expressed to me that just because my parents loved me, that didn’t mean that I was brought up well, that they failed to provide me emotional safety, that in their drunkenness, they were neglecting me and my older brother in terms of emotional stability and safety. We were both left to grow up on our own in many ways because they truly weren’t there for us. I almost got defensive of my parents about that because they loved us so much, but he was absolutely right. At my mom’s funeral, our best family friend (whose kids we were very close friends with) asked me if I knew why we were always at their house. Dumbfounded, I said, “I just thought we were good friends?” . . . She then informed me of something that my parents never told me: my dad would bring my brother and me over to their house when their drunken fighting got so bad that they didn’t think we should have been there. What an update on my mom at her memorial service! Who knew. Speaking of my older brother, I was 14 when I first went to visit him and his frat brothers at Eastern Illinois University, and they taught me about beer bongs and how to properly puke off of a balcony. Drinking was just normal to me. My family moved to the south suburbs after my 8th grade year, going into high school, the same time as my brother went to college. Our house had a big pool with a really nice deck, and because my parents were so loving and loved by all (the “cool parents”), they would let my brother’s college friends come party at our house, and as long as my high school friends didn’t drive, they could party with us, too. My parents, my college brother and his frat brothers, and high school Joe and a couple of his buddies . . . man did we have some parties there. Naturally, Dietz was the life of the party. It was just “my normal.” So, in my house—even though I didn’t realize that all of this was incredibly traumatic, it’s all I knew—alcohol was just part of life, and because I had no way to tell my parents to “be better,” it was just normalized for me . . . and eventually even encouraged. My parents were lovingly married until they each died, almost 30 years, and we had some good times and were spoiled rotten. No discipline, all party. When I went to Illinois State in 1999, I became a concert promoter and became known pretty well in town for it, and—naturally—carried on the legacy of throwing fun keg parties. Innocent enough, I suppose, but I mostly did it because that’s all I knew, and it was not only not discouraged by my parents but encouraged and following a “legacy.” Soooo . . . I suppose after explaining all of this together (I’ve never really pieced all of this together at once), it makes a whole lot of sense why it’s hard for me to give up the idea that I can just have a drink or 2 to unwind. It’s “my normal,” but the trauma I’ve endured is not normal at all. It’s not OK, and I deserve better. But 44 years down the road, I’m a creature of habit, and quitting eating and drinking has always been incredibly difficult. For some insane reason, when I think of drinking to unwind, I only ever think of the fun times we had, not the dark, disgusting, traumatic things I went through in watching my parents.

31. Growing up, my parents were separated. Both of them were alcoholics, so it was a constant influence in my life. The first alcoholic drink I had was given to me by my mother when I was 13 and in that same night, she also smoked marijuana with me. When I turned 16, I also started drinking and smoking with my dad. Alcohol severely perverts judgement. I remember thinking back then, “I can’t believe they



are doing this with me.” Through the years I took substance abuse to the next level and started using opiates and amphetamines. I was constantly chasing a feeling. I don’t recall times of true joy or peace during those years, just depression, anxiety, and physical and emotional pain. There are instances I only remember waking up and not what I had done the night before, where I’d been, or who I’d been with. I’ve woken up in strangers’ beds and in bathtubs half-dressed, in back yards with cigarette burns through my pants, in jail, in bar bathrooms, and several other places of embarrassment. The amount of fear and shame this brings is hard to explain. Regardless of what drug I was addicted to at the time, alcohol was always there. Like something to lean on until the harder drugs came back around. For me, alcohol led to harder drugs, full-blown addiction, and an abusive relationship with someone who was physically and sexually abusive. I’ve been strangled, pistol whipped, locked in a room for days on end, and shot at. There’s no denying he could have killed me on several occasions. If alcohol perverts judgment, imagine how much more so when other substances are involved. This is my only explanation for staying with him as long as I did. Had I not called out to God to deliver me, I don’t think I would be alive today. Either my addiction or a violent drunkard would have killed me.

- 32.** My History: Both alcohol, and afterward drugs, were introduced to me from my ex-husband and were present in my dating and married life. I tried to be both part of his life and the crowd’s life, but really, it’s a lie. Both are selfish, caring for our own buzz and high. It wasn’t long afterwards that I personally stopped both. Focusing on the alcohol (since this is the topic), I saw how the alcohol affected my mind and body. I only got sick and vomited with hard liquor. Alcohol is dangerous! Personally, at a camping trip with my then-fiancé and his family, I drank too fast and the next thing I know, they said I almost fell into the campfire and was carried to the camper to sleep it off! When my then-fiancé/husband drank, it was very embarrassing to me. His lack of inhibitions in public led him to say and act very embarrassing things and actions! I just wanted to hide! When he was drunk, I often was a target for verbal abuse. He sometimes would become violent and would punch walls at home, yet never hit me but was real close. After I stopped being part of his drinking (and doing drugs), it only became an avenue for my ex-husband to find other women who would. Adultery. From my upstairs neighbor whom he conceived a child with (he later showed me a picture of the child! That really emotionally hurt me, not only for myself but for the dumped neighbor and the child, Connie, whom he gave the name I had chosen if I had a girl, yes, double hurt), to also nights at the local bars (my brother later confessed to me of the many women he was with). Affecting my son. I parted from my husband when my son was 12 years old. 99% of everything that happened to me was never done in front of our son. He never knew of the adultery, the abuse. I had never really discussed this hurtful season with my son and always tried to shield him from it. I do know that in my son’s growing up years, my then-husband was really never there for him. I remember my son’s disappointments and hurt, of promises of fishing trips together and never kept. Alcohol (and drugs) took precedence in my husband’s life. Conclusion: Alcohol, BAD!
- 33.** I lost my virginity.

- 34.** Alcohol, followed by various drugs, was the vice that took hold of my father's life. How has alcohol affected my life? It turned my father into a drunk, high, shiftless man who was no good to/for himself and damaging to me. Alcohol destroyed my father and any chance for a little girl to know and be loved by her father.
- 35.** In the season when we as a church were justifying alcohol, I was ministering in the jail. I had a young man ask me to pray for him. He was in jail for a DUI. AA had been unable to help him, and another program had not worked either. He asked me to pray for him, and I agreed. But when I went to pray for him, I could only give him a token prayer. I had no authority, no power. I realized that my God would not help me in this, and I could not help that man. After that, my wife and I changed our stance and decided it did not matter if others could drink, we would not. People are more important.
- 36.** Drinking alcohol was not in my home growing up. It was during holidays when we would go to my uncle's (my father's brother) that all the adults would drink. It was during these times that my uncle's hugs and kisses became a lot more than a kiss on the cheek. Looking back, that is also when I started having issues with anger, self-harm, and eating disorders. I was 10-11 years old. Drugs and sexual activity followed shortly after. Married a man who was an alcoholic. Multiple DUIs, loss of license, financial issues, plus the effects on the children. Divorce produced more pain for children. Today the grown children have their own issues due to the environment raised in. One is homeless and an addict; one struggles on occasion with drinking to excess; all had to deal with trust issues. I have seen alcohol be part of the death of 3 of my siblings and cause the wreck that killed a cousin and his family. A lot of pain, hurt, messed up lives that might have been avoided.
- 37.** I grew up watching my dad struggle with alcoholism, and I swore that I would never drink. I saw the pain it caused and how it altered a person's actions under the influence. Although it was never my intention, at the age of 22—after backsliding—it was the very thing the enemy used to open me up to darkness, leading to 5 years of debauchery and deep sin. Cookeville has a strange culture around alcohol, unlike anything I've seen anywhere else. Every bar has its own vibe, and those who drink can't seem to help but hop from bar to bar, being led by what I believe is a demonic stronghold. There was so much blackmail, abuse, condemnation, and disturbing sin going on that I can only imagine how much worse it is now. Alcohol is a slippery path that drags people into self-deluded doctrines, making up excuses to justify drinking. I have no respect for any Christian who claims to love God yet willingly partakes in alcohol of any amount without conviction. It would be different if it were a genuine struggle and they desired deliverance, but based on my more than 10 years working in restaurants in this area, I've seen many Christians—including pastors—leave church on Sunday mornings only to go drink in large groups and on other days as well. If alcohol is the fence, they hold just 2 or 3 out-of-context Bible verses to cross that fence. How easy is it for the enemy—who owns the fence—to add even more darkness as they continue excusing their addiction? That was my struggle when trying to quit, and it was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to give up. I am thankful for these lessons, and I hope we all take them to heart.
- 38.** I used to travel out of town with construction. My co-workers would drink at night in the hotels. Just to fit in, I would drink hard lemonade. Only one a night. That became a habit that I eventually brought home to my wife. She began to drink



because I said it was alright. In no time at all, she was drinking everything and getting drunk regularly. I still only had one hard lemonade a night. Her drinking led to experimentation with porn, which led to weird sexual things. She eventually left me for a woman. One hard lemonade a night destroyed my marriage.

Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established. Selah. Order a coke.