

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK, SERIES

LEGAL BUT WRONG

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Ronny F. Wade, Speaker

The use of alcohol and drugs is a widespread problem in the world today. It is estimated that about seventy percent of Americans drink some mixture of alcohol, and nearly ten million are alcoholics. Four to five million Americans use cocaine, and a survey of teenagers thirteen to eighteen, revealed that twenty-six percent used marijuana on a regular basis.

Though the Bible does not condemn, by name, such things as marijuana, heroine, cocaine, acid, or other such drugs, it does condemn them in principle. When drunkenness is condemned in the Scriptures that principle is understood to extend to all mind-altering, addictive drugs.

Very few, if any, challenge the idea that drunkenness is condemned in the Bible (Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13; 1Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21; 1Peter 4:3). But, why is drunkenness wrong?

1. It impairs judgment. Isaiah 28:7 "...the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. Alcohol in the blood progressively suppresses the operation of those areas of the brain on which persons depend for clear insights and rational decisions. The Bible teaches that judgment is a characteristic to be cultivated, not destroyed or compromised. Philippians 1:9 "and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." (perception, discernment)

2. It steals away the drinker's self control. The desire for alcohol increases with indulgence. The more you drink, the more you desire to drink. 2Peter 1:5-6 teaches us that we are to add "temperance" to our lives. That is self-control. The Christian is forbidden from doing anything that compromises his self control. The decision to take the first drink or experiment with drugs indicates a weakness in self-control to start with.

3. After loss of self-control the drinker is defenseless against other sins. Proverbs 25:28 "like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control" NIV

How many fights, brawls, acts of fornication, adultery, child abuse, and even murder have been committed by people under the influence of alcohol or drugs who other wise would have never dreamed of such things?

4. Prolonged indulgence (in some cases only brief indulgence) leads to addiction. No one starts drinking with the ambition of becoming an alcoholic; yet 200,000 people per year become just that. According to the National Council on Alcoholism, there are nearly ten million alcoholics in the U.S. today. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that nineteen percent of adolescents or 3.3 million young people ages fourteen to seventeen are problem drinkers. Romans 6:12 "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

5. Alcohol and drugs have led countless millions to physical and spiritual ruin. Proverbs 23:29 "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine." Galatians 5:21 declares that those who participate in drunkenness "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

What About Social Drinking?

On the continuum between drunkards and alcoholics on the one end and the teetotal abstainers on the other end, there exist in the middle a large number of people who only drink occasionally. These people consider themselves "social drinkers." They argue that the abuse of alcohol is wrong, not the mere use of it for social purposes. To them so long as a person drinks without getting drunk, he/she has committed no wrong.

Alcohol is the only drug with which people use this kind of reasoning. Seldom will you hear someone argue that "it's all right to smoke marijuana, or use cocaine, acid, or heroin, so long as you don't use too much and get high. This sounds ridiculous to most of us. Yet the statement "it is all right to drink alcoholic beverages "as long as you don't get drunk" is widely accepted.

The idea of drinking "socially" without drunkenness is at variance with the scriptures. Ephesians 5:18 says "be not drunk with wine." "Drunk" translates the Greek word (methusko) which means "to make drunk, or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed in methuo (drunkenness) to become intoxicated" W.E. Vine p. 343 It is important to note that drunkenness is a "process" and not merely a "state". This is an important point, since most social drinkers argue that one is not drunk until he/she reaches a state of excessive drunkenness.

Even English dictionaries recognize the idea that drunkenness involves a whole range of progressive stages: American Heritage Dictionary p. 673 Intoxicate 1. To induce, esp. by the effect of ingested alcohol, any of a series of progressively deteriorating states, ranging from exhilaration to stupefaction."

The effects of alcohol begin when consumption begins, rather than slipping up on the drinker all at once after an extended period of drinking. The argument that if the above is true, then one would be drunk after only one swallow of beer misses the point. The important lesson in the argument for Christians is this: since drunkenness involves a process, the child of God should avoid that which sets the process into motion.