

How Much Alcohol Is Too Much?

To partake or not to partake of adult beverages as a Christian—that is the question. Or, at least it is often one of the more controversial questions in the “body of Christ.” Well, certainly, moderation in all things, right? But then who determines what moderation looks like or could moderation in fact be a moving target? Should we simply stay away from all possibilities because of the potential of the “weaker brother” situation (1 Cor. 8:9-11), as this sort of sensitivity seems like it might be the most loving thing to do? What about the Scripture where Paul encourages Timothy to “... use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent illnesses” (1 Tim. 5:23)? Yes, the wine in Paul’s day was likely much less intoxicating than the beverages available to us today, but are there advantages to us today in “using a little wine,” or do the slippery-slope possibilities far outweigh the potentials? For crying out loud; how are we supposed to land on this subject when we want the Bible to be our “plumb line”?

Now, I want to say right up front that it is not my intent to extol the virtues or lack thereof concerning alcoholic beverages for anyone. I am actually not here to try to justify or condemn any aspect of alcohol consumption. Such endeavors have been repeatedly attempted in the Christian community with relatively few lasting adjusted conclusions for anyone. My judgments surrounding this subject/activity may likely seem somewhat tame and possibly even a bit irresolute. I have spoken with others regarding this subject, with both sides of the aisle generally in some form of cautious agreement with my conclusions. Hopefully this assessment will seem practical and possibly even helpful, yet submitted in such a way as to be spiritually inoffensive to the majority of you.

For perspective, I have an intimate relationship with specific behavioral addictions both on a personal basis as well as coaching numerous others regarding their precise campaign. It

is likely, for this reason, that I view all life issues with a certain filter firmly in place. I am cautious, introspective and very intentional about most all aspects of how I approach various decisions . And I will consistently scrutinize mood-altering availabilities from a cautious distance, as reality is without hesitation my primary objective.

I had a pastor and friend who for years aggressively promoted the historicity and virtues of alcoholic consumption among the Christian community. He wanted to be sure we were all aware of the “great men” in Christian history who indulged themselves in this way; men who, without question, made a difference for the cause of Christ. He himself enjoyed an alcoholic drink or two on a semi-regular basis as well as smoking his pipe or a cigar to relax or in pertinent socializing situations, so this platform was from which he passionately spoke. Sadly, several years later, he found himself re-evaluating the wisdom of such an aggressive public stance as a number of people in his church were somewhat struggling with the moderation aspect and when certain groups got together to fellowship, alcohol and/or tobacco seemed to be a principal component of their time together. In fact, as it was known in our church that several of us essentially abstained from these types of activities, it could at times feel as though we were being intentionally excluded from certain gatherings; perhaps more of a perception on my part, but ostensible, nonetheless.

So, while not personally believing reasonable alcoholic use, in and of itself, is a “sin” or any such noise, why am I opposed to the personal consumption of alcohol? Simply stated, for me, there is a line in various aspects of impending behaviors that I have determined to do my best to keep a calculated distance from; a line I see people regularly moving towards, possibly seeing how close they can get before getting “burned.” Being repeatedly burned through the years on countless occasions as a result of adolescent decisions in life, it is something I now desire to do my utmost to avoid.

So instead of experimenting with:

- How much I can drink without it rendering me as inebriated? I avoid drinking alcohol.
- How much “garbage” on TV I can watch without it causing too many unwelcome stumbling blocks in my thinking? I don’t generally watch network TV, nor do I welcome inappropriate mind/emotionally altering material on my TV.
- How many R-rated movies I can watch without it affecting me too severely? I don’t watch R-rated movies unless it’s with Clear-play on my TV.
- How much nicotine I can partake of without it producing addictive cravings? I don’t smoke anything.
- How fast can I take that corner and stay in control of my car? I understand vehicle responses and stay absolutely within the limits.
- How much fast food can I consume and still stay reasonably fit? Very seldom will I eat fast food.
- How many people can I submit “hand gestures” to on the highway before I will experience unwelcome retribution? I attempt to “love my enemies...” No longer do I exhibit road rage antics.

So, my fellow Christ-followers, it’s really up to you. Are you going to hell if you “do” any of the above? That certainly doesn’t seem to be what the Bible indicates or God’s grace portends. But for many, it sure can mess with the sanctification and emancipation process after salvation. I personally believe I will position myself optimally to be “on the right track” if I pursue life intentionally, stay away from “the line” and say no to a little wine.

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