

What Does the Bible Say About the Consumption of Alcohol?

My wife and I live in a 55-plus retirement community. Sometimes I see something that shows we all have not lost our sense of humor—like the bumper sticker I recently read that asked:

“What if the Hokey Pokey really is ‘what it’s all about’?”

I mean, who am I to question someone else’s questions? Like the childhood tongue-twister: “How much wood could a woodchuck chuck IF a woodchuck could chuck wood?”

Have you ever actually seen a woodchuck? If so, how did you know it wasn’t just a groundhog who has a full day – every February – devoted to its celebration?

Actually, questions are good for us. They stimulate discussion and force us to think on our own. They can help us get beyond certain mental blocks and to achieve our goals. Some believe that the question is often as important as the answer. Consider this one:

Is consumption of alcohol good for you?

According to the World Health Federation, more than 2.4 million people died globally in 2019 because of alcohol, accounting for 4.3% of all deaths and 12.6% of deaths in men aged 15 to 49. So, it is both reasonable and even desirable for us to question if alcohol consumption is good for us – either physically or spiritually.

The WHF wrote in a recent press release:

“Any level of alcohol consumption can lead to loss of healthy life. Studies have shown that even small amounts of alcohol can increase a person’s risk of cardiovascular disease,

including coronary disease, stroke, heart failure, hypertensive heart disease, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation, and aneurysm.”

Meanwhile, an analysis of death certificate data in the United States, by the National Institutes of Health, showed that alcohol-related deaths increased among people in almost all age, racial, and ethnic groups over the 18 years prior to and including 2017.

Given the public portrayal of alcohol as necessary for a vibrant social life, it is unsurprising that these health organizations are challenging the widely publicized claims that moderate drinking, such as a glass of red wine a day, could be beneficial for health – due to the powerful antioxidants found in grapes. “To date,” the WHF concluded, “no reliable correlation has been found between moderate alcohol consumption and a lower risk of heart disease.”

Monika Arora, a member of the WHF Advocacy Committee, has said, “These claims are at best misinformed and at worst an attempt by the alcohol industry to mislead the public about the danger of their product.”

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This subject and these questions are added opportunities for maturing Christians to reflect upon their personal convictions about lifestyle practices, which the Bible may or may not specifically condemn nor condone.

Both the Old and New Testaments give examples and admonitions *about excessive consumption of alcohol* and condemn drunkenness among works of the flesh, which are not fitting for Christ-followers.

See Proverbs 20:1 and 23:29-35; Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-12; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8;

The Living Bible paraphrases the admonition of 1 Corinthians 6:12 this way:

“I can do anything I want to if Christ has not said no, but some of these things aren’t good for me. Even if I am allowed to do them, I’ll refuse to if I think they might get such a grip on me that I can’t easily stop when I want to.”

Some cautious Christians feel it is best for them to abstain from alcohol entirely to fully protect themselves and their families, as well as their testimonies and their witness for the Lord. But that personal limitation is a choice only mature, selfless and scripturally-sensitive individuals can make.

A Final Question

Is it possible that NO amount of alcohol consumption is good for us – either physically or spiritually? {eoa}

Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the Van Nuys’ California Foursquare church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog at and frequent articles for digital and print platforms.

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