



The  
**PROPHETIC**  
**CONDITIONS**  
Series



# THE ALCOHOL EPIDEMIC

*The Tragic Curse of Alcohol Abuse*



**ABOUT THE COVER**

Alcohol is a booming business. But its widespread abuse and addiction is destroying the lives of many—especially children.

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**Why the PROPHETIC CONDITIONS Series?**

Knowledge and technology are exploding, yet the world is drowning in a sea of problems! *Alcohol abuse* is on the rise. Vast regions of farmland are “dying of thirst” due to droughts and erratic *weather* patterns. The allure of *drugs* is fast seducing a younger generation that no longer knows how to be kids. *Crime* is more violent, more entrenched, more widespread than ever. *Immorality* is robbing families and youth of their innocence by “entertaining” sick, perverted, carnal desires. And the earth is choking in the *pollution* produced by humanity.

Why?

The *Prophetic Trends and Conditions Series* will report global trends and problems. It explains why humanity is deluged with such overwhelming—and insoluble—problems.

And points to mankind’s *only solution!*



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# THE ALCOHOL EPIDEMIC

## *The Tragic Curse of Alcohol Abuse*

Since ancient times, man has produced alcohol. In North America alone, annual alcohol sales have reached nearly \$70 billion. Alcoholism and alcohol abuse are growing—can they be overcome? Now you can understand the shocking truth of this global problem!

**E**ACH YEAR, governments spend billions of dollars to combat alcoholism. Television ads promote responsible drinking. Yet we continue to read sensational news reports about youth alcohol abuse. Mass media attention is not changing the conditions and trends of alcoholism in society. It is simply bringing witness to a problem too big to solve.

Society's attitude toward alcohol is changing. Notice this television ad campaign for a popular beer: More than a decade ago, the slogan for Michelob Beer was "Weekends are made for Michelob." Shortly after, the ad was updated to "Put a little weekend in your week." The latest ads say, "The night belongs to Michelob." In just ten years, alcohol has transformed from a weekend activity into a nightly habit.

*Webster's Dictionary* defines alcoholism as "continued excessive or compulsive use of alcoholic drinks." This differs slightly from the *clinical definition* of alcoholism: "A chronic disease, progressive and often fatal; it

is a primary disorder and not a symptom of other diseases or emotional problems."

Many do not understand that the signs of alcoholism are apparent before one technically becomes an alcoholic. Nor do they understand the deeper definitions of alcohol abuse.



**A**LCOHOL ABUSE is divided into five categories, based on the *amount*, *type* and the *effect* of alcohol on the drinker. While this list is not comprehensive, it will give you a basic understanding of alcoholism. You will begin to see the complexity of the problem and its effects on the alcoholic and society.

**The problem drinker:** He has a purely physiological addiction to alcohol. He uses it to combat emotional problems in his life. A problem drinker will drink excessively, but not compulsively. His drinking begins to affect his emotional well-being—and his fami-

ly's. This is usually the first stage of alcoholism.

**The hard drinker:** Like a problem drinker, he is able to control his habit. This second category is best defined by the physical problems appearing in his life. Cirrhosis of the liver, intestinal and other nutritional diseases begin to develop. Like the problem drinker, no outward signs are evident.

**The periodic drinker:** Consumes alcohol in binges. Binge drinking is the consumption of five or more drinks for a male or four or more drinks for a female in a single sitting. He will completely abstain from alcohol, then follow with heavy binge drinking.

These episodes are usually prompted by emotional swings or other psychological problems. He shows signs of addiction and will exhibit loss of control during these binge episodes.

**The steady alcoholic:** Most alcoholics fall into this category. They show signs of addiction and loss of control. They experience withdrawal from alcohol. These cravings then begin to dominate their thinking. Their tolerance for alcohol increases. It also affects all areas of their lives, including health.

**The plateau alcoholic:** He must maintain a minimal amount of alcohol in their system at all times. If he goes

without, he suffers severe and dramatic withdrawal. Maintaining a level of alcohol in his blood allows him to appear sober, but his social life will slowly break down.

At this stage, his health will also quickly deteriorate—ultimately leading to death.

While not technically belonging to one of the five categories, a large portion of society displays many of these characteristics. This causes many to brush aside this growing problem. It is a problem of “someone else—somewhere else.”

### **Is Alcoholism Your Problem?**

Many view alcoholism this way: “It does not affect me. Why should I be concerned?” They pay their taxes and live their lives without alcohol affecting their day-to-day actions.

Or so they think!

In 1992, the United States spent \$166 billion to combat this disease—roughly \$800 paid by each adult. And the amount continues to rise. From 1992 to 1995, it rose an estimated 12.5% to over \$200 billion!

Alcoholism affects more than just your pocketbook. Consider car accidents. In the United States, three out of ten people will be involved in an alcohol-related accident. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that one alcohol-related traffic accident happens *every* two minutes. It increased 4% from 1999 to 2000, and has risen steadily since.

Nearly 13% of U.S. adults will become victims of alcohol-related crimes. It is also a key factor in nearly *half* of all violent crime!

It may strike closer than you think—even in your family. One out of every eight American drinkers is an alcoholic or experiences problems due to drinking. Odds are, a member of your family is one of those eight.

Alcohol abuse affects *everyone*!

The problem is not going away. These growing numbers represent alcohol’s continual corrosion of society.

### **Shattered Marriages**

Studies show that consistent and stable family environments produce the

most grounded and successful children. A vital aspect is the love within the family unit. This is especially true of the married couple that creates the foundation.

But today, marriage is no longer a lifelong union. More than half of marriages end in divorce. It has become a temporary contract, easily broken.

**WHY?**

Alcohol abuse is a big factor. It destroys the family unit. According to the “Getting Them Sober Foundation,” alcoholism exists in 48% of American families. About 50% of divorcees have been exposed to alcohol abuse either in a previous marriage or while growing up.

When a bottle becomes primary in your life, everything else—including your spouse and children—becomes secondary.

When compared to couples that are still married, divorced (or separated) people are 300% more likely to have been in a relationship with an alcoholic. The effect is not limited only to their current marriage.

A second factor of divorce is money. While many do not associate a family’s income with alcohol, it does have a staggering effect. In the U.S., \$107 billion worth of productivity was lost directly due to alcohol abuse. Alcohol leads to sick days, reduced paychecks, and eventually unemployment. When bills cannot be paid, problems arise—leading to more drinking. This vicious cycle shatters families!

Such actions have immediate and measurable consequences on the marriage. But the effects on the children are more difficult to determine.

### **Looking Up to Their Parents**

Alcoholism affects children more than most would imagine. Thirty million adults were raised in alcoholic families.

When raised in a family that tolerates alcohol abuse, the child begins to develop unhealthy attitudes toward alcohol. He sees no fault in using it excessively or feels no need to exercise control. Because of this, such children are four times more likely to become alcoholics.

Mounting evidence now points to genetics. Children of alcoholics may be born with a genetic predisposition to alcoholism. It has been documented that alcohol, especially in excess, causes irreversible changes to the body. These new studies show that children can inherit these changes from their parents. Most children who receive these “bad genes” are also raised in an alcoholic home. But, these problems must not be used as an excuse.

Some children are born with short fuses and must overcome anger. Others constantly struggle with obesity and must fight gluttony. Similarly, children of alcoholics are born with a tendency toward alcoholism. They may also have to learn proper conduct from improper parents. There are two types of examples. A *good* one—to imitate, or a *bad* one—to avoid. Their bad example *can* help a child overcome “bad genes,” by showing them how not to behave.

When you combine predisposition and an alcoholic household, it should not shock you that *nearly one-third* of all alcoholics have one or more parents who are also alcoholics. Often, these children were exposed to alcohol even before birth.

### **Mother’s Selfish Choices**

The diet and health of a pregnant woman determines the health of her unborn child. Many do not understand how dangerous alcohol—even in small amounts—is to the development of a fetus. *No* study has concluded that even a small amount of alcohol is safe for an unborn child. Doctors recommend abstaining from alcohol throughout the pregnancy.

Among pregnant women who drink, fetal mortality rates are 77% higher. SEVENTY-SEVEN PERCENT! Even with dangers this great, 50% of mothers reported drinking during their pregnancy—some even binge drank.

While some infants survive the pregnancy, most do not escape unharmed. Infant diseases related to alcohol affect more children than Down Syndrome, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) COMBINED!

The most widely publicized of these alcohol-related diseases is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). It affects more than 12,000 infants *every* year. FAS is a grouping of preventable birth defects caused by mothers who drink heavily. Most noticeable are the infant's malformations—small skull, flattened face, sunken nose. Children with FAS are smaller than their peers and will experience a lifelong series of FAS-related health problems.

Mental and neurobehavioral defects are also common. Affected children experience varying degrees of mental retardation and require special care throughout their lives.

FAS is the leading cause of mental retardation and birth defects in nearly ALL industrialized nations. Four times as many suffer from FAS than AIDS and HIV combined! This completely preventable disease results in an annual cost of \$2.8 billion, and destroys the lives of children before they even take their first breath.

A secondary, but overlooked, set of problems is referred to as Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE). It affects four times as many children as FAS. It manifests itself as attention disorders or behavioral problems. FAE children are often never diagnosed. They spend their entire lives dealing with these problems. A July 20, 2001 NHDSA Report stated that, of those suffering from FAS, 95% suffer from mental health problems; 68% have problems with the law; 55% are institutionalized; and 52% exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior.

The costs of FAE are not as visible as those of FAS, making the exact dollar figures more difficult to establish. But an estimated \$1.4 billion is spent on this problem annually.

Aside from FAS or FAE, growing up in alcoholic household, along with the influences of the media, has a strong influence on defining a child's view of alcohol and what constitutes abuse.

### **Alcohol and Youth**

Alcohol has a strong pull on today's youth. Advertising and media present a very glamorous picture—sipping martinis, “partying it up” with friends.

They seldom show alcohol's darker side.

This makes it more acceptable and causes youth to begin consuming it at ever-younger ages—so young that 40% of fifth graders across the country have tried alcohol. Some of these pre-teens have even reported binge drinking. As children enter their teen years, the numbers become more dramatic.

By the time they have finished grade school, 56% have tried alcohol. The more alarming statistic? Fifteen percent have reported heavy drinking—binge drinking five or more times in the previous 30 days. It has immediate effects on children's development and health. But, as the trend dictates, drinking becomes even heavier as they enter high school.

By high school graduation, 80% of students have tried alcohol. Over a quarter report heavy drinking. They are already reporting alcohol-related health problems. This constant bombardment of alcohol into their developing system explains why nearly one out of every five teenagers has reported “black out” spells—not remembering some—or any—of the previous night.

Statistics show that a pattern has been formed in high school. But these trends among adolescents and teenagers pale in comparison to those found among college students.

### **Drowning in College**

Many have heard of first-year college students being overwhelmed—drowning in their schoolwork. But more and more students are replacing schoolwork with beer. They are literally drowning their systems in alcohol. Drinking has become so severe that it is killing 1,400 students—every year! College kids are three times as likely to be binge and heavy drinkers if they did so in high school.

A recent Harvard University study reported some shocking facts. The once male-dominated ritual of binge drinking is no long gender-biased. Women on campuses across the country “are not just drinking more; they're drinking ferociously” (*Time*, “Women and Drink,” Patrick Kilcarr).

Since 1993, colleges have seen a

125% increase in binge drinking by women. Sororities report that 80% of their members are binge drinkers. This has not come without consequences. A 2001 Syracuse study reported that twice as many women (as men) were rushed to hospitals with alcohol poisoning.

Although the numbers for women are rising to unprecedented levels, they are not yet equal with men. More than 50% of men have reported binge drinking. The highest levels were in fraternities, reporting numbers as high as 86%.

This is having direct repercussions on students. Frequent binge drinkers are 21 times more likely to have problems related to drinking. Failing classes or flunking out of college is the least of their problems. The Harvard study estimated that drinking was responsible for over 500,000 injuries and 70,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape. It also reported that 400,000 students are having unprotected sex resulting from drinking. Female drinkers reported a 150% increase in unplanned sexual activities, date rape and sexual assault. These increases contribute directly to the steady rise in sexually-transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy on college campuses.

We have seen that alcohol abuse begins as early as age five. It becomes worse throughout high school. Then, it explodes in college. The peak occurs at age 21. Now legally able to drink, 65% of students report heavy drinking.

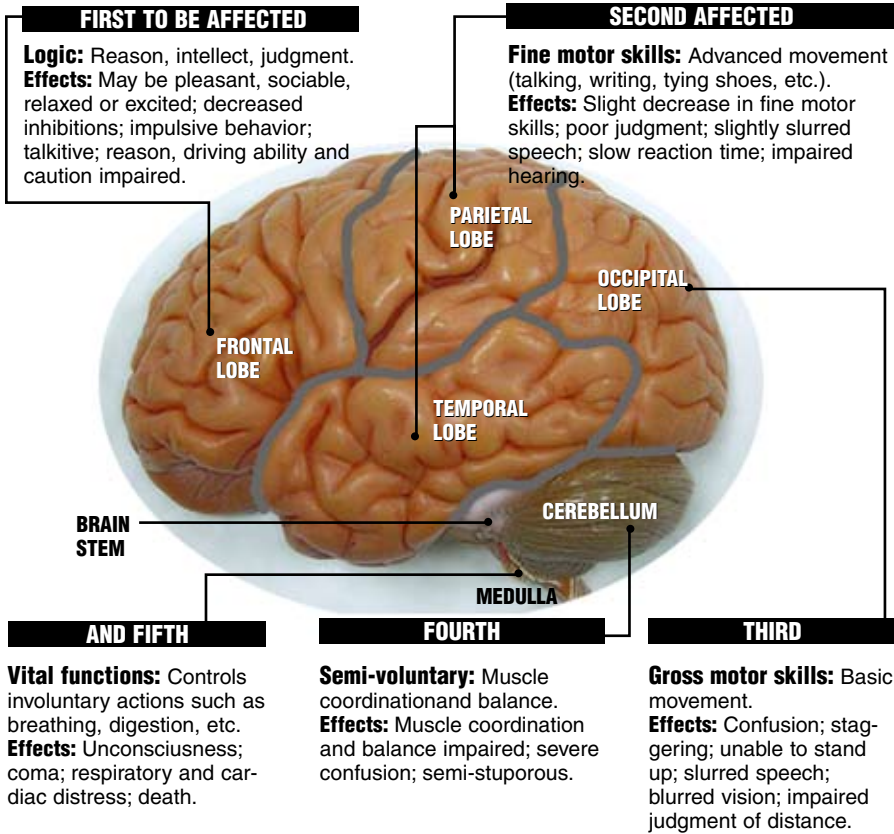
The most concerning statistic is their denial of over-consumption. More than 90% of binge and heavy drinkers consider themselves moderate or light drinkers. Denial is one of the first warning signs that someone is becoming an alcoholic.

### **Widespread Problem**

North America is not alone in the problem of alcoholism. Almost every country is experiencing problems with it. Many are far *worse* than the United States.

On February 21, 2001, European health ministers met to discuss the worsening problem of alcoholism in

# Alcohol affects the brain in stages



**Source:** The Kingfisher Visual Factfinder. [www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/health/info/aod/brain.shtml](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/health/info/aod/brain.shtml)

Europe. They began developing policies to reduce the growing percentages of youth drinking, because the problem is out of control. In all deaths involving youth, 25%—one in four—are caused by alcohol!

Russia's problem is far worse. In Russia, vodka is often associated with health and well-being. Many children drink—and sell—vodka! Its association with prosperity and hope, in a country devoid of both, has caused this catastrophic problem. On average, 160 young people die from alcohol poisoning EVERY DAY!

## Alcohol Abuse— Effects and Consequences

Alcohol abuse causes permanent changes in our bodies. Our bodies are well designed and will compensate for stresses to its systems. But even our bodies have limits. To better understand how alcohol breaks these limits, you must first understand how it affects the body.

Whether you drink a glass of wine,

a bottle of beer or a shot of spirits, you are taking in approximately the same amount of alcohol. Alcohol begins breaking down in your stomach, mostly due to an enzyme called alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH). Any alcohol that is not broken down enters your bloodstream and makes its way to your tissues. The water in your body facilitates the transfer from blood to tissue. Brain, liver and kidney tissues are heavily affected by alcohol.

It is important to note the differences between the effect of alcohol in the male and female body. While both have ADH in their stomachs, it functions differently in women. This enzyme is less active in its ability to break down alcohol, causing more alcohol to reach the blood. Women also have more fat than muscle. Since muscle stores more water, women have less of it in their system. So, not only do women have more alcohol enter their blood, they also have more concentrated amounts in their tissues!

This explains why a University of Vermont study showed that women, on average, had a 10% higher blood alcohol level than men. They try to match male drinking habits when their bodies were not designed to do so.

Research also shows that alcohol corrodes the female body more quickly. This has resulted in women developing chronic liver diseases 10 to 15 years earlier, even if only a fraction of alcohol is consumed.

Although women get drunk faster than men, alcohol affects the brains of both similarly. It inhibits the transmitters that allow your brain to function. The slowing down of these transmitters is evident when you watch someone who is drunk.

## Alcohol Effects

The only exception to this is the chemical *serotonin*. When you first drink alcohol, the level of serotonin sharply increases. It is responsible for happiness, excitement and mood stability. Most anti-depressants work by regulating serotonin levels in the brain.

But unlike anti-depressants, the serotonin increase from alcohol is short-lived. Alcohol's numbing effects eventually reach the receptors that *take in* serotonin. This causes the absorbed amount of serotonin to drop dramatically below normal. You can observe this in someone who is drinking. The first few drinks will cause him to cheer up and become talkative. However, as the drinking continues, his mood will be more somber, or he will experience severe mood swings.

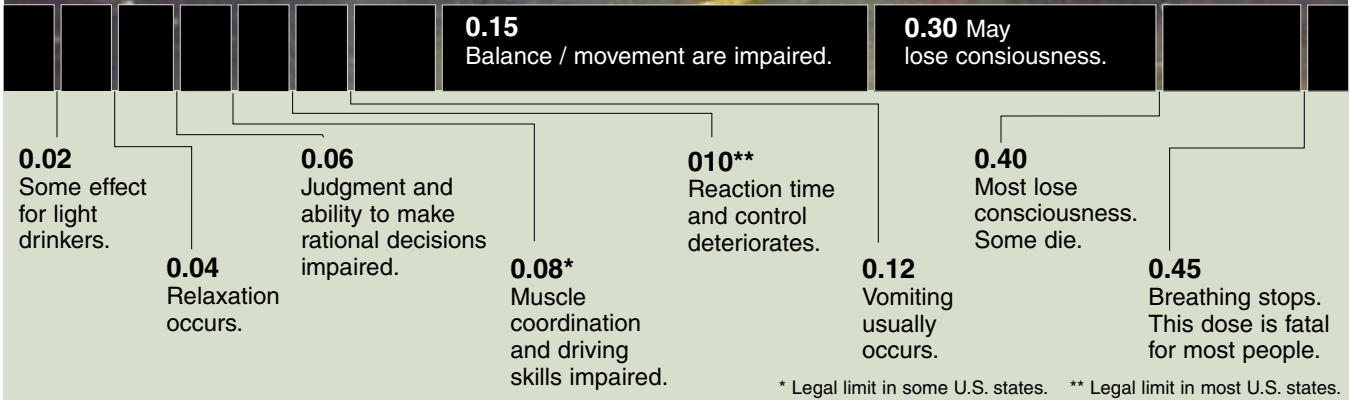
As blood alcohol level (BAL) increases, these transmitters and receptors become less and less efficient. Lower BALs affect higher-level functions in the brain, such as the senses, speech and related thought processes. As great BALs are reached, low-level functions, such as breathing and coordination, are also affected.

At the very lowest BALs, alcohol tends to lift spirits, and cause individuals to become more talkative. Many have heard the expression, "wine makes the heart merry."

As the alcohol continues to flow, inhibitions disappear. Judgment becomes impaired. Speech slurs. If

# Effects of blood alcohol level

Alcohol affects motor skills and decision making in a number of ways



drinking continues, coordination will become jerky and haphazard. This is the stereotypical “falling-down drunk.”

Past this point, the individual begins to slip in and out of consciousness. Breathing may be suppressed. Continued drinking will exaggerate these conditions. The drinker may stop breathing completely, or slip into a coma and die.

## Processing Alcohol

Our bodies have a type of built-in mechanism to avoid death by alcohol poisoning. Most will “pass out” before poisoning occurs. But binge drinkers drink so much, so fast, that their bodies do not have time to use this mechanism. Acute intoxication—alcohol poisoning—hospitalizes more people than any other alcohol-related problem.

Your body has multiple methods to metabolize (break down) alcohol and will even overcompensate when repeatedly flooded with too much.

The concentration of AHD is highest in your liver. Most alcohol is broken down there. A chemical reaction con-

verts alcohol into an acid, which can be expelled. Alcohol also metabolizes in the kidneys and is expelled as urine. All remaining alcohol evaporates into the lungs, where it is exhaled.

A common misconception is that one can “beat” a Breathalyzer by eating. A Breathalyzer test actually reads the amount of alcohol evaporating from your blood, into your lungs. It has nothing to do with your stomach.

Your body is resilient and can recover from large doses of alcohol. But, if repeated, it begins to change its functionality to compensate. The liver is the first organ to begin responding to prolonged alcohol abuse. The enzymes that break down alcohol begin to be mass-produced. This puts stress on the liver. Over time, parts of the liver will harden and die.

The corrosive nature of alcohol will also irritate the stomach and intestines. The combination of these effects is why alcohol is responsible for hypertension, cerebrovascular disease, chronic hepatitis and other chronic liver diseases.

The brain will also attempt to overcompensate for the lack of efficiency

in its transmitters and receptors. It will fire both faster and with more intensity. This allows alcoholics to appear “normal,” even with a high BAL. But like an engine that is revved extremely high for extended periods, things *will* break down.

In the case of the brain, the receptors and transmitters will stop firing altogether. Not only does this “revving” of the brain kill it, it also leads to the addictive nature of alcohol.

Overstimulating the brain’s nerves, in and of itself, is addictive. When drunk, an alcoholic will appear sober. But when *actually* sober, he is jittery and short-tempered. He will then associate a certain level of alcohol with feeling normal. A third effect is related to his decreased serotonin levels. As explained above, serotonin is largely responsible for stability of mood and happiness. This decrease results in a lack of emotional control.

These emotional effects change, depending on the level of intoxication and gender of the drinker. It is most notably marked between genders by our natural social inhibitions. Because

inhibitions between the sexes differ, the response to lack of inhibitions is equally different. Men will tend to be brass and more prone to violence when drunk. Women will become more sexually liberal and trusting. These differences usually lead to unwanted consequences and regrets the next morning.

Because of such consequences, both genders will typically sink into depression and self-pity when sober. Some studies show that this depression is more likely to result in suicide for girls. Eighth grade girls who are heavy drinkers are *three times* more likely to commit suicide than their peers.

Both genders will associate alcohol with a release of these feelings. They will try to drink themselves out of depression or numb their minds to reality. With the body over-compensating for the amount consumed, they will have to drink more and more to reach the same level of intoxication.

This cycle caused 19,171 alcohol-induced deaths in 1999. This is only direct alcohol deaths—such as alcohol poisoning. It does not take into account deaths due to alcohol-related *diseases*. Alcohol abuse is the primary cause of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, the 12th leading cause of death in the U.S.

With such incredible evidence against alcohol, you may wonder why it is legal—and socially acceptable. Although widely misunderstood, alcohol—in *moderation*—does not have these negative effects. In fact, moderate alcohol consumption has many health *benefits*.

### Alcohol for Health

Wine is famous for its health benefits. For centuries, it has been considered a superior beverage. Louis Pasteur stated, “Wine is the most healthful and most hygienic of beverages.”

The favor of wine has also shown itself in non-medical circles. Plato said, “No thing more excellent nor more valuable than wine was ever granted mankind by God.” While extreme, such statements shine light on the attitudes toward wine through the centuries.

A recent study by the World Health Organization showed a marked drop in heart disease in France. A French diet tends to be high in dairy fats, consid-

ered to be a cause of heart disease. This brought special attention to an apparent statistical paradox.

When researchers added wine consumption into their analysis, they noticed an interesting fact: Regions with moderate levels of wine consumption had a noticeable drop in heart disease. This was the first modern research into the health benefits of wine.

Other studies have continued to show that not only wine, but all types of alcohol—consumed in moderate amounts—can lower instances of heart disease. When consumed with a meal, wine has also been shown to aid digestion.

Both wine and beer are rich in minerals and vitamins. One liter of beer has up to 60% of your daily fiber requirements. While the physical benefits of alcohol continue to be discovered, the emotional and social benefits have been known for millennia.

Wine and beer are common at social gatherings. An expensive dinner is not considered complete without the appropriate wine.

Alcohol has the ability to calm the nerves and help people become more social. Alcohol has been shown to stimulate the social centers of the brain, ease nervousness, and open conversation.

Alcohol has numerous physical and social benefits. It has been used for centuries all over the world. But many religions have condemned alcohol completely. They claim that it should not be consumed—that it is a sin.

But what does the Bible say about alcohol and drinking?



**T**HE BIBLE GOES into more detail about alcohol than most realize. Like many subjects in God’s Word, many have preconceived ideas about what it teaches.

The Bible *does* teach HOW to consume alcohol. Both the Old and New Testament discuss different types of alcohol.

Yet many “Christians” teach that, instead of moderation, we should abstain from alcohol completely.

### Abstinence or Moderation?

On most issues, it seems that there are two ditches—two extremes—people fall into. This is true with drinking. One ditch is the belief that the Bible states that *all* drinking is wrong—sinful. Alcohol *abuse* and *drunkenness* is the other ditch. But is *all* use of alcohol wrong? Or does the Bible teach that its *misuse* is wrong?

People have ignored what God’s Word teaches about this. For example, the Women’s Temperance movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s played a large role in the legal prohibition of alcohol in the U.S. This organization was considered the “moral watchdog” of the nation. The name of the organization is misleading. It should have more appropriately been called, “The Women’s Prohibition” or “Abolition” Movement. They did not believe in temperance—but rather total abstinence. They believed that the problem was *any* use of alcohol, rather than its abuse.

The period of prohibition in the U.S. was short-lived. Smugglers brought loads of illegal alcohol across lakes and up rivers, or on trucks, concealed in ingenious ways to bypass the authorities. Soon the government realized that private demand for alcohol outweighed public demand to ban it.

### Wine or Grape Juice?

Before discussing the Bible’s view on alcohol, let’s remove the misconceptions. A common one is that the meaning of the word translated in the New Testament as “wine” is actually *grape juice* or possibly even *molasses*.

Actually, there are *fifteen* words from the Hebrew and Greek translated “wine” in the Bible. Let’s compare these words in the context in which they are used. This will help in better understanding their scriptural meanings.



Genesis 9:21 is the first scripture in which *wine* is mentioned. The Hebrew word used there is *yayin*. It always means “fermented wine, primarily from grapes.” Notice: “And he [Noah] drank of the wine [yayin], and was drunken.” If Noah became drunk, then he could not have been drinking grape juice. This could not have been anything other than an alcoholic beverage.

Now notice verse 24: “And Noah awoke from his wine.” This indicates it was the *wine* that made him sleep or that had caused him to pass out. Grape juice or molasses does not cause people to pass out.

Further, I Samuel 25:36 states, “Nabal held a feast...and Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was *very drunken*.” This is another proof that wine was an intoxicating drink.

One more Old Testament example is found in Isaiah 28: “Woe to the *drunkards* of Ephraim...that are overcome with *wine* [yayin]” (vs. 1).

Next, notice Genesis 14:18. One identified as Melchizedek, King of Salem, served wine to Abraham. This wine (yayin) was the same liquid that had made Noah drunk! Hebrews 7:2-3 states that Melchizedek was “king of peace...without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.”

This Person is none other than Jesus Christ! (For proof, request our free booklet *The Bible’s DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES Explained!*) God brought Abraham wine because He *approved* of the modest use of alcohol.

Another Hebrew word, *shekar*, means “an inebriating drink.” This is wine prepared or distilled either from honey, dates or barley. The Bible describes it as “strong drink.” This is definitely an intoxicating drink—one containing alcohol.

### The Feast of Tabernacles

God says that it is not improper to desire wine or strong drink during His annual Feast of Tabernacles, which He commands His people to keep: “And you shall bestow that money for whatsoever your soul lusts after [desires], for oxen, or for sheep, or for *wine*, or

for *strong drink*, or for whatsoever your soul desires: and you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall *rejoice*, you, and your household” (Deut. 14:26).

The Feast of Tabernacles (occurring in the fall) is one of seven annual Holy Days, or feasts, which God commands His people to observe. The true Church of God keeps them. (Request our free booklet *God’s HOLY DAYS or Pagan HOLIDAYS?*)

Wine can also be used to help one relax and rejoice. King Solomon wrote, “A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes merry” (Ecc. 10:19). There are several places in the Bible where God emphasizes the importance of having a merry heart and enjoying hearty laughter. Modest amounts of wine or other kinds of alcohol can help promote this.

Many additional scriptures could be cited to show God’s servants using wine in a responsible way, and with God’s approval.

### New Testament Word for Wine

The New Testament word translated “wine” is usually the Greek word *oinos*. The story of the Good Samaritan shows that wine (fermented alcohol) can be used as an *antiseptic* to treat wounds. A small amount of oil (usually olive oil) would be poured on the wound to soften it, and then a little wine used to cleanse it (Luke 10:30-37). Today, rubbing alcohol is still used as an antiseptic.

### Water Into Wine

Jesus’ first recorded miracle was to change *water into wine*. Take note that His miracle was not the other way around! He did not change wine into water. Not only did Christ approve of drinking wine, but His miracle was actually for the purpose of providing alcohol for everyone in attendance! The “governor” at the wedding even commented that it was “*good wine*” (Jn. 2:1-12).

If this had merely been grape juice, he would not have said, “but You have kept the good wine until now.” The point is that better wine would normally be consumed at the start of a feast, and that of inferior quality should be saved for later, when the taste is not

quite as important. This principle does not apply to grape juice.

### A Warning from Proverbs

Some scriptures, if not read carefully, *seem* to condemn the use of wine. But they do not condemn its *right* use—only its *wrong* use. Nowhere in the Bible does God condemn drinking wine—as long as it is not *abused*.

In fact, as stated above, He encourages its modest use, along with other strong drink, during the Feast of Tabernacles. The moment that overdrinking begins is the moment that sin begins.

Let’s now consider Proverbs 23:29-35 (NKJV): “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who *linger long* at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’”

This describes someone who has consumed way too much alcohol. A drunk is belligerent, combative, seemingly always ready for a fight—and always complaining about this or that injustice, because his senses are in a stupor. Those in this condition commonly seem to imagine themselves as having been wronged. Overuse of alcohol blurs judgment and perception.

This paints the familiar picture of a drunk stumbling and falling, and perhaps bruising himself without knowing it. His bloodshot eyes (redness) come from excessive drinking. Later, he may sober up and wonder where his injuries came from. Yet he may already be looking for his next drink.

The Bible clearly defines an alcoholic and his problems. He cannot function properly, is often anti-social, and, in the end, is usually concerned

only for himself. He disregards the needs of others.

Does any part of this picture resemble you? Is this a picture of your weekends—or even a typical weeknight out? Are you one who goes to the local tavern or bar for “just one,” but does not know when to quit? Drunkenness and alcoholism clearly violate God’s Law.

The apostle Paul wrote that no thieves, idolators, adulterers, extortioners or *drunkards*, etc., “shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9-10).

God has standards—and they are described in His Word. This includes the RIGHT and WRONG use of alcohol. God prescribes neither abstinence nor overuse of alcoholic beverages.

### Moderation in All Things

Is drinking wine and other alcohol sinful pleasure, or a healthful, life-improving habit? We saw that Christ approved of it. His actions and words set the example Christians must follow.

God expects us to use alcohol wisely. Drinking is *not* wrong or sinful—but *abusing* it is! The bottle is not the problem—it is the *person* holding the bottle!

As with food, money or anything that has the potential for misuse, moderation is the Bible standard for all true Christians. Paul wrote, “everyone that strives for the mastery is *temperate* in all things” (I Cor. 9:25), and “Let your *moderation* be known unto all men” (Phil. 4:5).

Does your drinking interfere with your day-to-day life? Are you concerned with how it affects your health? Alcoholism is a problem that can be overcome. But first you must truly *want* to overcome it.



**L**IKE ANY ADDICTION, alcoholism can be beaten. An alcoholic can overcome and stop the control alcohol

has over his life. Unfortunately, most never seek help. Nearly 90% of alcoholics will eventually die from conditions related to their addiction.

Overcoming alcoholism is not just a matter of giving up drinking. The alcoholic must take definitive steps to remove the influence of alcohol from his habits and lifestyle.

Alcoholics have used alcohol as a way to cope with their social and personal problems. Steps must be taken to create other ways to cope.

As we have seen, alcohol permanently changes the brain’s chemical makeup. This changes the way your body will react to it. Once someone becomes an alcoholic, he can *never* drink alcohol again. *Any* attempt to become a moderate drinker will cause him to fall back into his old patterns.

Another danger is addiction to other drugs. Experts have found that the brain has an “addictions switch.” Once this switch has been turned on, it can never be turned off. This leaves the alcoholic susceptible to other forms of addiction. Many who try to stop drinking replace alcohol with drugs, food, gambling or sex.

This is why alcohol (and all addiction) treatments focus on becoming *alcohol-free*. Once you have turned on your addiction switch, you cannot drink “normally” again.

Although the process may be difficult, alcoholism *can* be overcome, through personal motivation and support—from God and family.

### Understanding the Alcoholic

Family and friends usually begin the healing process. But before confronting an alcoholic, you must first understand the process the alcoholic must go through. If you are a family member or friend of an alcoholic, it is critical that you are educated in how alcoholism has affected you.

This report has given you deeper understanding of how alcohol affects the alcoholic and society. While this information is important, you must understand the physical and emotional effects that giving up alcohol will have on the addict.

Do not expect an alcoholic to quit “cold turkey.” Doing so may harm heavy

drinkers. Their bodies have become accustomed to alcohol. They must slowly remove it from their systems. If they do it too quickly, they will suffer severe and life-threatening withdrawal.

Many recovering alcoholics relapse into drinking. However, do not view this as a failure, but as a temporary setback on the road to an alcohol-free life. Like overcoming any sin, the battle is life-long. Friends and family must *especially* support them if they relapse.

### Confronting the Alcoholic

Confronting an alcoholic with his problem can be a turning point toward starting his recovery. Those with an influence in his life are the most successful. Before any action is taken, the confrontation process must be thoroughly understood.

A common misconception is that alcoholics must hit “rock bottom” before any recovery can begin. Many alcoholics receive treatment because they are forced to make choices due to confrontation.

A confronted alcoholic may feel backed into a corner. He will try to avoid taking responsibility for his problem. He may issue many false promises and hopes without taking the necessary steps to begin treatment. Giving firm and constant pressure—in a loving manner—should help him overcome this initial hurdle.

There are many professional organizations that can assist in the confrontation process. They include classes and primers to help make it successful. It is critical to have a full understanding before beginning. When properly applied, this can assist the alcoholic in taking his first steps toward sobriety.

### Treating the Problem

Once an alcoholic recognizes his problem, he must seek treatment. Alcohol abuse affects both the mind and body. These problems must be addressed separately.

Physically, the alcoholic may suffer from dietary deficiencies. Correcting them will help both the body and the mind. As the body gets stronger, less energy will be spent repairing the physical damage. This energy can be used to repair emotional damage. Proper diet

also promotes good mental health and is essential to emotional recovery.

As previously stated, the most important part of recovery is learning how to cope. The alcoholic has developed a pattern of turning to alcohol whenever a problem arises. This must be replaced with proper methods of coping and teaching the alcoholic how to solve problems—instead of hiding from them.

Many organizations have been established to help with both sides of the healing process. But special care is needed in choosing one. Some will only

focus on a particular phase of recovery. You must properly understand the purpose and mission of the support group or center before becoming involved with them.

Some have detoxification centers. They allow the alcoholic to slowly dry the body of alcohol. Over time, severe alcoholics may have saturated their bodies with alcohol and will need to “dry out” their systems.

Others focus on the emotional aspect of the process. Depending on the alcoholic’s recovery phase, different organizations may be more effective.

A long-standing organization is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). It focuses on the recovering alcoholic’s long-term health. Although it does not have detox facilities, it supports the alcoholic emotionally and teaches him how to improve his diet. AA has been effective in helping alcoholics achieve permanent sobriety.

If located in the U.S., or in Canada, Britain, Australia or other Commonwealth nations, information on these programs can be found in your telephone book or on government websites.

Citizens of other countries should contact their local government for more information. The U.S. and Canadian government have websites that offer more information on treatment and support organizations.

### Look to God

Alcoholism and alcohol abuse is a catastrophic problem in the world! It tears apart families, marriages and lives. The billions spent each year are failing to combat this ever-increasing problem. As world conditions grow worse, more will use alcohol as an escape—more lives lost and families destroyed.

But *you* can overcome it!

This world accepts many sins. Often what is simply sin is called a syndrome—disease. Calling alcoholism a disease takes the responsibility away from the drinker. Unlike the flu, you do not “catch” alcoholism. You *choose* it!

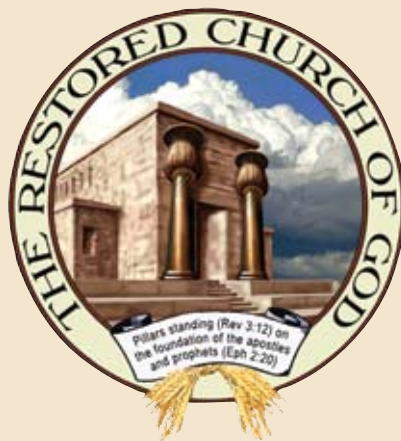
Society will always make excuses for sin. But God’s Word declares that no drunkards “shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9-10).

Alcoholism is *sin*. God would never bar someone from His kingdom because of a disease! If alcoholism were merely a disease, He would heal it (Psa. 103:3)—not command against it! God heals diseases—not choices. The choice is *yours* to make.

*You* can beat alcoholism and alcohol abuse. *You* can exercise moderation in all aspects of *your* life. Look to your friends and family for support and guidance. There are programs to teach you how to cope with *your* problems.

But most of all, look to God! He can give you the understanding, hope and power to overcome alcohol abuse. □





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