

# Wine is a Mocker: A Biblical Call to Sobriety | What Does the Bible Say About Alcohol?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today's topic is about alcohol. Wine is a mocker, it talks about, and it's a biblical call! There's significant social, personal and biblical implications to do with alcohol. What does the Bible say that's what matters and God's warnings, God's commands and the consequences of the use of alcohol. As Christians we must along with the scriptures not culture. So you know I was just talking to someone before how Aussie culture is really soaked in alcohol isn't it? We know just about everywhere everything you do alcohol is there for some of those things. So just to introduce things we think about alcohol. It's a pervasive issue and it costs billions of dollars. In fact it's 15.3 billion. That's that 2013 figures. They reckon it was 15.3 billion dollars the cost of alcohol every year and it's linked to countless deaths, accidents and crimes and really it's an alcohol saturated culture, Aussie culture isn't it? And it's widespread, it's culturally accepted, even amongst Christians. So the view that I'm putting forward tonight is kind of a minority view because some 64 percent of Protestants drink, some 81 percent of Catholics drink. Our standard is not the culture though but it's the Bible, it's the scriptures and so we're going to try to unpack what does the

Bible actually teach us about alcohol and there's many warnings right through the word of God. There's differing views about alcohol as we say depending on how you interpret the Bible, culture, personal convictions. Basically there's two positions and the position that I'm putting tonight is total abstinence. So not touching it. It's called the teetotaler position. There's another view, the moderate drinker that say you can control it as this permissible use. What is God's viewpoint? Again, I'm putting the position that it's best not to touch the stuff to keep right off alcohol, complete abstinence. And to put that view we're going to look at some of the spiritual, moral and practical dangers that are associated with the consumption of alcohol. And the teetotaler view is that alcohol consumption really is unwise, even sinful, and total abstinence is the safest and most biblical stance. And I put to you that this position is really rooted in Bible warnings and really understanding what the contemporary culture is. We see the dangers of it. Whereas the moderate view emphasizes Christian liberty and personal responsibility, but it almost condones or excuses alcohol and justifies it, even though it's very doubtful. And really, I would hold that the moderate drinker view is a flawed view.

It's a flawed viewpoint. Now, you can feel free to disagree with me. I know some in our own church would disagree with me, and that's fine. You don't have to take my view. But I'm putting that view, and I'm trying to justify it from the scriptures, why there is a biblical view on the subject. So we need to consider the total biblical revelation on the subject. And there's many warnings. It's full of warnings about alcohol. And there's many principles that the scriptures tell us when you study the word.

And so we want to look at the whole tenet of what the Bible actually teaches about alcohol. It's definitely against alcoholic drinks. The scriptures as a whole, they would advocate teetotalism, which means abstinence from alcohol. We know the Bible says, as Paul writes 1 Corinthians 9, and every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Paul talks about temperance, which means really constraining yourself, not accommodating. Whereas the drinker view would say they're not temperate. Alcohol has been called the biggest stumbling block for this generation.

[ 4 : 12 ] And it's almost like an unusual thing to hear a message like this, to actually stand up and say, no, it's not good for you. It's not right. And to love people enough to warn about alcohol. That's my objective tonight, to warn about the dangers of alcohol. Even if you might justify it, to try to encourage you to take the strong of you rather than the weak of you. To take the strong of you. Yeah, I want to be temperate in all things. A double L. Not to kind of excuse something that's got a big question mark about it. To have the courage to say, no, I want to stand strong and take the high of you.

I want to take the high road rather than settle for something that's compromising. And love people enough to warn people about the dangers, even though we are in the minority. A lot of Christians would laugh at this kind of message tonight. But God's got lots of commands and warnings about alcohol. And so we're going to look at some of those scriptures that really stand out. There's explicit instructions to avoid alcohol. And it reflects God's desire for holiness for his people. This is a really fundamental one. Proverbs 20 verse 1, it says, wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. So at the heart of it, alcohol is deceptive. It leads to unwise decisions.

And it leads to folly and moral failure. Wisdom says, avoid it. Don't be deceived by it. Proverbs 23, 31, it says, look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. God says, don't even look at it. Let alone drink it. Don't even look at it.

And don't look at it when it's tempting. So when it moveth itself aright, it's talking about that it's fermented, it's sparkling. So it's got a certain attraction to it. Leviticus 10 verses 9 and 11, it reads, do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.

So Leviticus 10 is saying that priests were forbidden to drink while serving God. And Revelation 1 verse 6 says that for all Christians, we are called kings and priests unto God. Every believer, every Christian, man and woman is a king and a priest unto God. So alcohol is something that was forbidden for the priests. You see there Leviticus 10. And then Proverbs 31 says, it's not wise for kings to drink wine.

[ 6 : 55 ] Revelation 1 verse 6 says, and he hath made us kings and priests unto God. Alcohol, it clouds your discernment between right and wrong. And it says there in Proverbs, we would reckon the words of Solomon, 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 the judgment of any of the afflicted. There's a real warning there to those that are in rulership, in leadership, as kings. Leaders must stay sober to rule justly. As God's people, we're also called to lead holy lives and to have that same high position. Hey, I'm a king and a priest. I don't want to mess with the wine, the strong drink. As God's people, we're called to lead holy lives. And so we could consider this as a commandment that we can take heed of too. Psalm 1 tells us that blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. It's saying there that we ought not to hang around those that are of question. 1 Corinthians 5.11 tells us that we should not keep company if a man who's called a brother be a drunkard. It's talking there about the separation from drinking, the drinking culture. It's going to protect us to not hang around, to keep company with those people that are drunkards. It's going to protect our walk with

God. Another scripture, Habakkuk 2.15 reads, Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour a drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunk also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness. It's telling us there that even to give someone a drink is wrong. To not pass alcohol along to people. It's a sin to enable someone else's drunkenness. So God pronounces a woe on those who do. Don't give your neighbour a drink. There's many clear warnings in Proverbs 2. We see Proverbs 23 from verse 29. A vivid description about the misery and destruction, the deception that is caused by wine. It reads there about woe, sorrow, strife and addiction.

So there's many woes or distresses, if you like, that come from drunkenness. It says, Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause?

Who hath redness of eyes? So often a drunk will wake up and they've got injuries and wounds from when they had a fight, when they were under the influence. It says, They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine, look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. It says, At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. So it might look good like it's attractive in the cup, but at the end it's going to be like a snake that's going to bite you. It's toxic. And it says, Thine eyes shall behold strange women and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, they shall be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. So picture there of someone at the crow's nest of a mast of a ship. So just rocking and reeling, they're kind of at sea. It says, They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick. They have beaten me and I felt it not. When shall I awake?

I will seek it yet again. Picture there of the, I've got to get another drink. I'm going to seek it yet again. Even though it's causing all this misery and mayhem, I'm going to seek it yet again.

[ 10 : 40 ] So there's a picture there about the excess, about how it's going to sting like an adder. It promises joy, but it delivers sorrow. It's a real picture of the misery of alcohol, a clear warning.

And we see that in Proverbs, there's many woes and warnings about alcohol, the evil results of alcohol. You can look all these up later. And in the notes, there's a lot more information.

It tells about five evil results from drinking. Poverty, misery, immorality, instability, eternal damnation. So many, many warnings about the evil results of drinking.

And the Bible specifically warns people to abstain. As we talked about, that kings and leaders, it is not for kings to drink wine. Leaders are called to clarity. So it's kind of a shameful thing when you see some of our politicians sloshing the alcohol around. It's going to impair judgment.

We see Belshazzar in Daniel 5, that he was unwise drinking and making foolish decisions. We see priests and ministers also forbidden to drink. We're a royal priesthood, it tells us, in the New Testament, 1 Peter 2. And there's many examples of abstinence, which are good examples. Here we see, for example, the Nazarites, they abstained from wine and strong drink. It's a sign of their consecration. People like Samson and Samuel. And we've got Daniel and his friends. They refused the drink of the king, and they chose rather purity. We see John the Baptist, another great example. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth and he drank no wine, so he made a stand. And also the Rechabites are another example. So there are some good examples of the godly who said no to drink and they stood strong.

[ 12 : 36 ] And there's a lot of emphasis in the Bible about sobriety. In other words, being sober and having self-control. 1 Peter 1.13 tells about being sober-minded. It says in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 6 about being sober, which has got the sense of watchful, alert and sober. And it talks about the leaders' roles in the New Testament. So elders and deacons, not given too much wine. So it's a call for that abstaining.

Certainly the highest standard would be to have that high standard to abstain. There's other scriptures that talk about abstaining from alcohol, to not be among wine bibbers. So people that are indulging in wine, don't hang around them. Again, that scripture we read about those that tarry long at the wine, they're going to have all kinds of woes and miseries, wounds, contentions, babbling, redness of eyes. We talked about that one, woe unto him that giveth his neighbour a drink. And then another one, Hosea 4.11, it says, hoard them and wine and new wine take away the heart. So when someone gets alcohol in them, it takes away their heart. They just lose rational intellect and reasoning. Galatians says that drunkenness is one of the 17 works of the flesh.

And Paul says in Romans 13, to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof. Alcohol carries death and ruin, harm and eternal consequences. It's going to bite like a serpent. It's a poison disguised as pleasure. So you know, when someone gets alcohol, they get what's called intoxicated. So the word toxic is there, which means poison. It's toxic. It's a poison. Let's look at what the Bible says about wine in the scriptures. And to understand the subject, it's helpful to know that there's different terms and context. So there's numbers of different words in the Hebrew. The first three there are Hebrew words, and then the last one is a Greek word. They've got different shades of meaning, these words. So the first one, turosh, it means fresh grape juice, unfermented, pure. It's often translated as new wine or grapes, used straight after pressing. So it's free of alcohol. In Bible days, fermentation took time and fresh juice was common. Here it's actually a blessing in the context of Joel 2 verse 19. Then the next word, yayin, is a general word for grape juice, sometimes fermented. For example, in Genesis 9 21, obviously it was fermented because Noah got drunk when he had that one. And then shekar is also an intoxicating drink. Always negative, that one.

So you've got there, do not drink wine nor strong drink. So that was that Hebrew word there. And then in the one of these words is oinos, and it's a broad term. So it's a bit of a generic term. And it can mean grape juice, fermented or not. So in John 2 verse 10, where it was the wedding feast of Cana, I would put to you that that was not fermented. That was grape juice. And so we'll unpack that a little bit later. That word oinos, it can mean fermented. It can mean unfermented. Talking about fermentation, fermentation, it is a process of decay, of rotting. So it wasn't that God made alcohol. It's a man-made thing. It's not God's perfect creation. And when the ancients stored new wine, they used fresh goat skin bottles to avoid fermentation. So the Lord's talking about it here in Matthew 9. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles. So the old skins had this yeast residue that would speed up fermentation.

But the new wine was unfermented juice. So it was really just grape juice. We think about alcohol, it's not natural in plants, but man accelerates it with chemicals. And modern alcohol is different from what was alcohol back in ancient culture. They did have methods to preserve and refrigerate foods and liquids too. Some people say or think, well, they wouldn't have been able to stop it fermenting. No.

[ 17 : 16 ] Ancient civilizations still had the know-how to stop that process of fermentation. They could preserve things and they could keep things cool so that they didn't ferment. Some Bible references to wine. There's over 470 references to drink or drinking about 260 references to wine. And it's interesting of the 260 references to wine of one kind or another that some 200 of those references are against it. They're condemnatory.

There's at least 16 different words translated wine. So some are generic that they could mean new or old wine. They could mean fermented or unfermented wine. They could mean intoxicating wine or not intoxicating wine. So you've got to look at the context to work out what it's being talked about there. The Greek word for wine can refer to grape juice itself or wine, whether fermented or unfermented.

It can refer to food like a syrup, like molasses, you know, like a thick kind of paste, a kind of jam, kind of substance. That could be called one of these words as well. So one type of wine was sweet, pleasant, refreshing and unfermented. So it wasn't alcoholic. And that was accepted by God and gladdened the heart of man. The other was exciting, inflaming and intoxicating. And it caused men to err, to make stupid decisions. And it caused the shame of Noah, the first recorded drunk in Genesis 9. But there's not one passage mentioning intoxicating liquors that speaks well of them. So for those who try to justify drinking alcohol, well actually there's no Bible verse that speaks well about alcohol.

There are positive references to wine, but it's speaking about the new wine in the cluster. It says there's a blessing in it, in Isaiah 65 verse 8. So Canaan was a land of corn, wine and oil. That was a good thing. And the first fruits and the best of the wine and oil was given to the priests. So this was new wine. And then you've got wine in medicinal use, 1 Timothy 5, which we'll talk about.

And Luke 10, 34. Of course when the Good Samaritan came and he poured in the oil and the wine, there was a good use of wine, a good use of that as a medicine to treat the injured man. So there's positive references to it, but it's not about the alcohol of today, in the setting of where it's positively spoken of. And then it's also talked about symbolically too, various references there to alcohol as a symbol of God's wrath, of the wine press, of his fury, of his judgment, and also then of the true vine, Christ being the vine, we are the branches, and the vineyard of Israel.

[ 20 : 14 ] So there's positive and symbolic references of wine, but we're not going to go into that tonight. But more about what are the effects of alcohol in the Bible. What does the Bible say about alcohol?

And an important kind of interpretive method when you're trying to interpret the Bible, it's called the first mention principle. So where a topic's talked about in the Bible, and it's the first time it's talked about, it's got a special significance to it, it's something to take note of. And the first mention of drunkenness is Noah.

Noah, sadly, he was a righteous man, but obviously he had his failings, and alcohol turned out to be one of his failings. In Genesis 9, 20 to 21, Noah began to be a husbandman or a farmer, and he planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine and was drunken. And he was uncovered within his tent, so he was in this shameful situation where he was naked, and it was a disgrace, it was a shameful thing, that he got drunk. And it was really a blot on Noah's character there, a curse on his family. And it's a picture of alcohol, what it does to people. It's a shameful thing. It's going to pull you further than you plan into a sin that you never intended.

So whether Noah might not even have realised that it was alcoholic, you could conjecture that, maybe it's the first time wine as alcohol was talked about. But alcohol is just, it's a picture there of how it's so easy to get into a mess with alcohol, as Noah pictures for us there.

And then there's other examples we could think of, loads of them here that we won't go right through, but think of some examples where alcohol is talked about, all in a negative way here.

[ 22 : 02 ] It's all negative. Like Lot and his daughters, incest occurred after intoxication. Lot's daughters got him drunk and led to illegitimate children, the Moabites and the Ammonites. Alcohol enabled an unthinkable sin in Lot's case. And then you've got Nadab and Abihu, they offered strange fire, so they were doing something that was not right as far as God's plan of ministry goes.

And alcohol was involved. We see Nabal was a man who drunk himself dead drunk and then 10 days later, he also passed away. Nabal, his name means fool. And that's what alcohol does, isn't it? Makes a fool about people. Other examples you see listed there as well. We won't go through all of those, but basically they're all examples of people getting under the influence of alcohol and the damage that it does.

And it's all a woeful record of misery and a whole lot of mess that happens. And the Bible is very clear about that. You could think of other warnings that are more specific like in Isaiah 28 verse 7, verse 7. It talks about people that have erred through wine, so they've made mistakes, they've erred, they've gone the wrong way because of wine, and through strong drink they're out of the way. The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, so they've made bad judgments. They're swallowed up of wine, they're out of the way through strong drink, they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. Even God's servants fall when they drink, and they lose vision and judgment and end up in all kinds of trouble. Proverbs 23, again it talks about 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. It's a picture of a drunk there, isn't it? And there's a whole load of woes that come because of alcohol. Then Isaiah 5, it says, Well unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, they regard not the work of the Lord. You know, some people they just can't wait to get out of bed to have their first drink. That's how the drunk is, isn't it? And they forget God entirely.

Now it's a very sad thing, so we're not condemning people for these things, we're just saying it how it is, what the scriptures say. It's a very sad situation. We feel sorry for people that are in that situation.

[ 24 : 36 ] So if there's anyone watching who might be in that situation, we're not condemning you here, we're just declaring what the Bible says about the danger of it. And if only we can open our eyes and see that we need God's help to get free from alcohol. Thank God we can. This is not to condemn anyone, that there's no hope. There is hope that we can get free from alcohol and its clutches.

So another section here, think about the physical and spiritual harm. Even just the fact that physically, the health people tell us that alcohol is just woeful to the body and the damage that it does. And of course, our body, the Bible says it's God's temple. It's the Holy Spirit's temple. And it's something we want to look after. We've only got one body. We want to make it go the distance as long as it can, don't we? And God forbid that we should pass away prematurely because of unwise alcohol consumption. So in the notes here, it talks about alcohol. It's a poison. It's a narcotic.

It's a depressant drug. And doctors call alcohol a cellular toxin. It works like a poison on the body. And it affects all of the cells of the body. It's rapidly absorbed and it's slowly eliminated. And doctors tell us that no amount of alcohol is safe.

In fact, less than 1.1% blood alcohol level can cause death. So it's only a small amount in the scheme of things can kill you. Look at how it affects the brain. Alcohol is bad for the brain.

[ 26 : 20 ] It acts as a disrupting agent in the electrochemical operation of the brain. It puts the brain to sleep. So it deadens the brain function of intelligence, of reason, moral and religious convictions. So your decision making, your choices, your discretion, your willpower, your self-control. It lessens caution and judgment.

It dullens concentration, memory, discrimination, insight. Every time a person gets drunk, they destroy about 2 million brain cells. That's a lot, isn't it? Now, we've got quite a few of them, but I wouldn't want to lose 2 million brain cells so easily as that, would you? But it is a sad truth. And once they're lost, the cells of the brain are lost forever. You can't get them back. There's no replacement.

So there's this permanent damage to the brain. And the toxic action of alcohol upon the brain can lead to insanity for the alcoholic. Alcohol has a long-range effect on the brain. All parts of the body are able to rebuild or replace damaged cells except the brain and the nervous system. So there's long-term damage and all of those aspects of the brain there. Also, it affects key organs as well. We think about the liver. It processes alcohol. It can lead to hepatitis, fibrosis, cirrhosis, liver cancer. Alcohol attacks the liver. And so the liver's got these fine moist cells. It's our great food storehouse and they can get dried up permanently and it cannot be reversed back to normal. So that's called cirrhosis of the liver. It's incurable. You can't fix it. Think about the heart. Alcohol increases blood

pressure. There's risk of arrhythmia, cardiomyopathy, angina, stroke, heart disease. The list goes on here. I'm only touching some of them. Congestive heart failure. And there's this clogging action that damages the heart muscle tissues. The pancreas. Alcohol triggers inflammation. It's called pancreatitis, which can impair digestion and insulin production. And you get early diabetes too. The stomach. Alcohol irritates the stomach. It damages the stomach lining and the intestines. Leads to gastritis, ulcers, digestive issues. The kidneys.

Alcohol alters the fluid and electrolyte balance. Impairs filtering. Causes degeneration. Ultimately malfunction. So I trust you've seen there's lots of reasons why. Just even, even just sensibly to avoid alcohol. It's just no good for you. Alcohol, it causes blood sludging, depriving the brain of oxygen.

And so that is essential for the functioning of brain cells. And it leads to malnutrition too. So people think, oh they'll have a drink instead of food, but alcohol has no food value. There's no minerals, vitamins or proteins. Some people, when they substitute alcohol for food, they're depriving their body of essential nutrients. And alcohol also interferes with the digestion of food that is eaten. As much as some people might want to drink with their food, it's actually going to hinder the digestion of their food.

[ 29 : 46 ] So there's all kinds of things here. There's a whole list of them. And you see on the screen there too, that blurring of vision, muscle coordination, loss of mental and physical abilities. The balance organ, the cerebellum as well gets affected. So we see how the Bible talks about that. A man becoming unsteady, staggering. Their speech gets slurred. It affects their circulation, their heartbeat. Intoxication, ultimately it can lead to a deep sleep, coma and death. So there's a respiratory paralysis. And they say that excessive drinking can shorten the lifespan by 10 to 12 years.

As well as that, your health's going to be worse, so your life is going to be less enjoyable too. There's a whole load of things that you see in that other paragraph there. Risks of cancer. The list goes on.

We won't read all of that, but I think it's enough to be clear that there's many dangers. It's just common sense not to drink. It's just going to do you damage. Every drink is going to cause you damage.

And aside from that, we think about the spiritual side of it. And as we talked about, it tells us that as God's people, as believers, our body, it says, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Alcohol harms your body. As we talked about, the physical body of a believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit. So we should abstain from anything that's going to injure it. Paul says, all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient. So he's saying, I've got a lot of liberty about what I can do. But he's saying, not everything's going to be good for me. So we've got a sense where we have got liberty to do this or that, but not everything that we choose to do is going to be good for us. It's not always going to be constructive and helpful or beneficial. And so he says, I will not be brought under the power of any. Think about alcohol. It's got a very powerful hold on people.

[ 32 : 03 ] It masters people, this habit that forms. And rather we want to be under God's power. We want to be brought under God's authority, not under the control of any substance such as alcohol. It's just going to damage us and hurt us and cause spiritual harm. A motivation that we as God's people ought to have is that whether therefore you eat, drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. Drinking can't glorify God if it's going to lead to sin or harm. Paul says, it is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. So if we're going to be setting a bad example, even if we might have personal liberty that we feel that we can drink, if we are drinking where others are watching, then it's going to cause confusion.

It's going to be a poor testimony. It might cause your brother to stumble if they're an alcoholic and such. So Paul's saying, even if I've got liberty to do it, it's good not to drink wine. It's very clear there.

So even one drink can cause others to stumble, whether it be believers or unbelievers. Romans 6.13, Paul says, neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God. When we yield to alcohol, it can lead to sin, not righteousness.

And there's a question too about moderation. Some would say, well, moderation, moderation is what they would say, but there's no moderation in sin. In Romans 6.1, it says, what shall we say then?

Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. There's no safe amount of what God forbids. Sin is sin. I know I was reflecting, well, if it takes 10 drinks to get drunk, well, even if you just have one drink, you're 10% drunk. How much is acceptable? How much is moderate? How much is excusable? How can we justify? It's better not to have a small amount. It's better to not be partly drunk. It's better to abstain. It's the safest way. It's the best way I put to you.

[ 34 : 33 ] There's no safe amount of alcohol. Think about the spiritual perspective about alcohol. It lowers inhibitions. It makes you vulnerable to drunkenness. So you start to lose sense. It can lead to fornication, to public shame. It's an evil instigated by Satan. You see really Satan's fingerprints all over it, what it does, what it leads to. Here's a quote here.

Drunkenness corrupts the blood, defaces beauty, diminishes strength, weakens the brain and destroys reason. It hardens the heart, is a devil to the soul, a thief to the purse, the beggar's companion, the wife's woe and the children's sorrow. So much misery, so much misery to do with alcohol.

And we would wonder why would we want anything to do with it? Look at the devastation of alcohol in the world today. And these are just some figures. There's astonishing, horrific statistics that talk about the damage of alcohol. And I know I saw lately what's going on in Alice Springs with alcohol. I know what's going on at Catherine, having talked to a cop from Catherine lately. And you see, yeah, alcohol, once it gets a grip of a population, gets a grip of a people, it causes such damage and destruction, doesn't it? You just have to see it, what it leads to when it's let loose on a community. And alcohol, it ravages families, communities and nations, costs huge dollars there. The cost to the government, the cost to the community, the cost to the person themselves, the cost to the healthcare system.

It's a factor in, they reckon, 50% of all crimes, 50% of all car crashes, 80% of all home violence, 30% of all suicides, 60% of all hospital admissions, 60% of all child abuse, 50% of all arrests, 60% of all divorces, 75% of rapes. It's horrific. It's a shocking statistical fact that alcohol is very much a factor in a whole lot of misery all around the world. And they reckon that there's over 1.6 million Australians are now alcoholics. That's a lot of people, isn't it? Around 300,000 are brain damaged by booze. Think about the damage of drink driving. It fills cemeteries with innocent victims. You know, you might be the one who's not drinking and gets smashed into by a drunk driver. Youth lose their purity, their virtue. As alcohol dulls their conscience and inhibitions, they wake up not knowing what they've done the night before. Fathers waste their income, deprive their families of necessities.

Families are neglected as men spend time drinking with mates. Domestic violence often comes from drunkenness. And there's so many unwise and regrettable decisions, violence that's committed under the influence. And the sad thing is, even as a social drinker, a moderate drinker, if we're going down the bottle of buying the stuff, we're supporting the corrupt industry that's causing all this mayhem and misery in our world. You know, how could you justify it?

[ 37 : 48 ] Proverbs 21 says, He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man. He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich. Now there's exceptions to that, but generally speaking, drunkenness leads to poverty.

It's a waste of resources. The Bible talks about the waster. It's a very serious thing. Proverbs 23 says, Be not among wine-bibbers, so those that are drinking on, among riotous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. Think of the billions that get spent every year on alcohol, and the cycle of destruction, the absolute misery that it causes, the death, the accidents, the crime. Every bottle that gets consumed is all part of this. And you could reckon there's a demonic aspect to this too. I mean, here's behind it. Which side would the devil stand on as far as alcohol as to justifying it?

And when we see the wrecked lives, the broken bodies, the premature deaths, even those who profit from it are tainted by its hellish trade. And Evangeline Booth, so William Booth's wife said, It's Satan invented Christ dishonouring and soul-ruining, abomination.

When you're at the grassroots, at the front lines of dealing with people that are in the clutches of alcohol, it's just, it's such a miserable life for people. And the Bible just really warns us over and over again. We think about addiction. As Dr. has said here, Dr. Anderson Spickard, in a book called *Dying for a Drink*, he says, There are no safe amounts of alcohol.

[ 39 : 32 ] He says, I have known patients who are regularly intoxicated on one beer or a glass of wine. Some might think, oh, just one drink. But no, you don't know how it will affect you. And once

you're hooked, there's this craving that happens that's going to destroy you. The World Health Organization says alcoholism is the world's number three health problem after cancer and heart disease.

The Bible talks about this craving for more and more of it. Just another drink. I'll go yet another. A strong drink is raging, it says. It's got this really powerful effect on people.

Another doctor here, Dr. Emerson, describes alcoholism as the most destructive, preventable disease, a self-chosen poisoning, and it's sanctioned by society. Of course, the government loves it because they're getting money out of alcohol taxes. As many as one male in 20 is an alcoholic.

One woman in 100. In fact, the statistics I was reading, some other statistics were saying that women are catching up to men. There's a lot more women becoming alcoholics now too.

So nine out of 10 addicts drink themselves to death. About 7,000 people die in Australia from alcohol-related illness. And that doesn't include the road accidents, so it's a lot more.

[ 40 : 52 ] And for each alcoholic, there's another four people that are affected. Think of that family circle, the influence of people, the powerful effect on the day-to-day lives of other people that are in the life of the alcoholic. And it's truly been said, one drink is too many, a thousand is not enough. So just to start the first drink, to have the first drink, to start getting hooked. One drink is all it takes, and one drink is too many. But a thousand is not enough. Once you get in the clutches of alcoholism, then a thousand drinks are not enough. It just can't get enough of it.

You can't get satisfaction. And addicts call it an ungovernable appetite, a passion, a paralysis of the brain, a consuming madness, like a burning fire. Think about the ABCs of the liquor industry.

It arms more villains, breaks more laws, corrupts more morals, destroys more homes, engulfs more fortunes, fills more jails, grows more grey hairs, harrows more hearts, incites more crime, jeopardizes more lives, kindles more strife, lacerates more feelings, maims more bodies, nails down more coffins, opens more graves, pains more mothers, quenches more songs, raises more sobs, sells more virtue, tells more lies, undermines more youth, fails more widows, wrecks more men, excites more passions, yields more disgrace, zeroes more hopes than any other enemy of mankind. It's a terrible blot, isn't it, on society, alcohol. And as I say, the danger of even one drink, because a single drink is the start of that downward spiral. One drink makes you partially drunk. Your judgment is impaired immediately, and it sets you on a path. It's going to lead to ruin. Think of the horrors of alcohol, broken homes, hurt lives, lost hopes, the hell that it brings. One drop of poison is too much.

Here's a quote from an authority in France. Alcoholism is caused by a slow and unperceived impregnation of the organism with alcohol. Hundreds of thousands are alcoholics who have never been drunk. So some would say, oh, I can handle it. I can, you know, I can take it without me getting drunk.

But it's that small repeated use that builds up that addiction, and they don't even realize it. Some scientific facts. It's possible for alcoholism to be a permanent state from consistent small consumption. And it's more disastrous for the offspring of alcoholics than the drinkers themselves.

[ 43 : 41 ] So it leads to a lot of destruction in your offspring, your children. A lot of destruction. And of course, you know, pregnant women should not drink because it just really hurts the baby.

One drink is a vote for the world's ways and the devil's agenda. Look at why people get drunk and why it's wrong. Some reasoning why people get drunk, why it's wrong.

Some people think they're going to escape reality by drinking. They're going to have fun. They're going to forget their problems. Getting drunk really rejects the clear mind that God wants us to have, not some messed up mind. God wants us to be sober and clear thinking, not ruining our minds with something that's foolish and sinful. Drinking doesn't solve problems. It makes depression worse.

As our Lord warned about it, he says, take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfacing like worries and drunkenness and cares of this life. He says, don't get in that vicious cycle of drink. Drunkenness hurts families. It wrecks families. It causes fights, hurts, poverty, arguments, contention. The Bible talks about wine mocking, strong drinks, starting trouble, raging. The abusive spouse of children. Families end up poor because drunkards waste their money and they can't be responsible with it. So lots of reasons why it's going to hurt families. Don't do it.

We see drunkenness leads to worse sins. So all kinds of immorality, fighting, even murder. People use alcohol to lower their defenses and do wrong. See Lot's daughters, they got Lot into strife there. We see wild parties, carousals, drinking parties, that kind of culture. That's the world's culture, isn't

it? It's Aussie culture, let's face it. And Paul talks about this kind of culture of the deeds of darkness, darkness. And God hates drunkenness. So when we might be invited to a party where alcohol is there, we've got to be very careful about what we do in such a situation. Certainly not to partake of the alcohol. Just keep yourself sober and be a witness, God helping you. Drunkenness is a sin. The world would say drunkenness, alcoholism is a sickness, but really the Bible calls it a sin. It says don't be drunk with wine. Don't do it. Getting drunk is a choice. It's something we choose to do. It's not something you can't control. God says to not do it. There's a choice that we have not to do it. [ 46 : 20 ] And the world would excuse it. Hey, it's a disease. You know, you've got something wrong with you. But then that denies responsibility. Yet we are responsible for what choices we make. And God holds us accountable for that. But thank God we can trust Christ to help set us free. God can help us get victory over alcoholism. So even if we might be inclined that way, or we're tempted, or we're in the clutches of it, we feel like we're an alcoholic, we're an addict, there is hope. There is grace with God. We can find God's deliverance. And we can trust Christ. That's the ultimate answer, is to trust Christ, to be your saviour, and to give you strength to resist temptation.

The Bible does talk about drunkards facing judgment, that the drunkard cannot go to heaven. 1 Corinthians 6 verse 10. But God provides a way to escape. So a drunkard can be saved. So in the context, it does talk about, such were some of you. So there is hope, even if you feel like, hey, I'm a drunkard, I'm not going to get to heaven. Well, if you trust Christ, then you're saved. He's forgiven you of your sin. He's going to help you get victory over that situation of that addiction.

That there is a way to be saved, to have God's salvation, and God's power to overcome that addiction. So you don't need to be thinking all hope is lost, because there's always hope in Christ, of his forgiveness and of his grace. The Bible calls us to holiness. It's a really strong message in the Word of God, be ye holy. And the fruit of the Spirit, one of the fruit of the Spirit is temperance, which means self-control. So there's this sense where we're granted God's spiritual power to overcome. We've got the fruit of the Spirit. God helps us to get the strength to resist, to have self-control. And we're urged to separation, to not toy with it, to mess with alcohol and those who do, to realize that alcohol is harmful for us, and we should reject it. We should have self-control.

And it talks about, in 1 Peter 5 verse 8 there, how we should be vigilant and be sober. And there's many references in the Scriptures to avoid alcohol, because it's questionable for us.

Even those who would say, well, we'll take it in moderation, it says that one in ten social drinkers become alcoholic. There's the only guarantee of not becoming an alcoholic is not to drink.

[ 48 : 50 ] The bottom line is don't drink. Don't even try it. Avoid temptation. Complete abstinence will help you to not go down that slippery slope. We cannot become an alcoholic if we never drink. So the best choice is to choose not to drink. If you're still one of the young people here tonight, especially, you know, don't even think about alcohol, because it's just going to do damage, it's going to do you harm.

And it's one of the fleshly lusts. 1 Peter talks about abstain from the fleshly lusts which war against the soul. It's a lust, it's a desire, it's a craving, and it's going to become a life-controlling habit.

Get victory over it now before you even think about going that way. It's also a stumbling block as well. Like we talked about before, Paul says it's good not to drink wine if it's going to cause another brother to stumble. So even if a weaker brother is going to be led into sin by your liberty of drinking, it's better not to have it, not to do it at all. That your liberty you'll hold back from for the sake of others. That you'll actually think, hey, that's not a good witness and that's not a good testimony to my brothers and sisters in Christ. Anything that's potentially harmful that I do, even though I might feel like I can do it, I'm going to abstain for the sake of others. A question to ask when we're thinking about considering alcohol. Is it going to cause my brother to stumble? Am I going to put a stumbling block in their way? Am I going to cause an offence? Are they going to be made weak because of my actions? Am I going to give them an occasion to fall or be tripped up? Who knows, if someone watching you have a little sip of it, they might go and indulge and become an alcoholic and end up destroying their life from it. So it's better that you abstain just for the sake of others because there's an impact from what you do that others will watch you and be led by you. Can we drink to the glory of God in the weight of all the scriptures, in the weight of the many manifold scriptures that warn us about alcohol? Not to touch it. Be a testimony. Rather be a testimony. Aim high. Set your affection above.

Let your target be the highest standard. It says abstain from all appearance of evil. Even if there's a only a little bit of evil in it, don't even toy with it. Abstain from all appearance. And so total

abstinence is really the best testimony that you can give. The best testimony that you can have is to set your bar high for yourself and be an example to the believers. Paul tells Timothy there. Be an example to the believers. We've got a responsibility to other people as well. When we might have some liberty that we would rather choose that which is wiser, that which is going to be beneficial for others. When you think about what alcohol does, it devastates families, causes so much misery, addiction, abuse, broken families. We should stand against something that's going to be destructive and love our neighbour enough to abstain from it, even for their sake. Alcohol is addictive and destructive. We've seen all the figures there, the facts and figures, the statistics. It's horrific.

[ 52 : 18 ] The misery of alcohol. And the Bible talks about this shameful spewing. In Isaiah 19 it says, a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. That's the picture of it, isn't it? The ugly picture of the drunk staggering in his vomit. It brings shame and suffering. It's a reproach. It's an ugly thing. It's a vile, stinking, rotten thing. And it destroys a person's health, their wealth, their honour. It leads to broken homes and broken lives. Now, just to move on to some other scriptures that some would try to use to justify, to condone their drinking. And it's interesting, I want to just put this message up on social media lately just to say, this is the topic tonight. And the people that put their hand up and yell and scream and try to justify their drinking. And try to find some angle to justify, to excuse, to condone that they indulge in drink. And so to answer that, I'll put to you some of the arguments that they would use. Well, Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana.

In John 2, it talks about that Jesus turned water into wine. But the wine here, the wine, the word wine, oinos in the Greek, as we talked about before, it can refer to fermented as an alcoholic or unfermented grape juice. And the context suggests quality, not intoxication. And it's interesting, John 2, 11, it says that the miracle manifested his glory. Do you think that alcohol and all of the misery that alcohol is would manifest the glory of God? No. I think the Lord Jesus would not do what the weight of scripture condemns. The vast majority of scripture that has anything to do with wine is against it. Particularly, well, anything that is clearly alcoholic wine, God is clearly against it. So most likely, this was unfermented wine. It was called good wine. And there's an authority of the time there, a man called Pliny. So back in the day, back closer to that time, he defined best wine wine as unfermented wine. So it was grape juice. Giving alcohol to wedding guests would obviously contradict Habakkuk 2, verse 15, where it says, woe to the one who gives his neighbour a drink. So the Lord wouldn't go against that scripture. He wouldn't go giving an alcoholic drink to his neighbour because that would conflict with Habakkuk 2, verse 15. So I put to you that the wine that our Lord gave in John 2 was really new wine. It was fresh, fresh from the grape. It was grape juice, unfermented grape juice. Another one that people try to use to justify drinking, Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine. 1 Timothy 5, 23, it reads, drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. So in this context, clearly it's talking about medicine. It's medicinal use. It's not social or recreational. Notice it's a little. It's a little for one thing. It's just a little for the stomach's sake, not as a lifestyle. Again, most likely this was sweet, unfermented wine. It is healthful and beneficial. There's known health benefits of non-alcoholic grape juice, which is rich with glucose. It's interesting in Acts 2, it talks about the word wine where it was the day of Pentecost. The word is glucose in the Greek. So that's not the word in this occasion, but there are Bible words where the wine is the word glucose, which is referring to glucose. And there's a man of the time back in AD 280 called Athanius. And he said to someone, this is outside of the Bible, that he says, take glucose being very good for the stomach. Fresh wine, this grape juice, the pure juice of the grape is good for the health. People tell us that now, that grape juice is good for your health. It's nutritious. Whereas fermented wine is not. Talked about the stomach, what the alcoholic wine does to the stomach. I don't think that Paul was talking about alcoholic wine, because alcoholic wine is not good for the stomach. In Genesis 40 verse 11, it talks about the cup bearer of the king, and they squeezed the grape juice out of the grapes into the cup for the king. That's Genesis 40 verse 11.

[ 57 : 19 ] We see the cup bearer squeezed the grape juice, fresh grapes squeezed it into the cup for the king. That was the best wine. That was the good wine. That was recommended. That was unfermented wine. It was pure, fresh grape juice. It's good. And so that's, there's nothing to indicate alcohol there.

Then another argument people would use is the Bible allows moderation or everything in moderation. But of course, the Bible tells us very clearly that we're to be sober, to be vigilant. It

warns us over and over and over again against alcohol. And clearly the wisest, safest path is abstinence, to abstain.

There's no excusing it by talking about moderation, because you don't know how moderate do you do. What's moderation? What's an allowable amount before it's not moderation? So some practical reasons just to kind of sum up here some of the practical considerations.

The spiritual clarity by avoiding compromise. Don't toy with it. Don't allow yourself that measure of measure of confusion. Rather, say no. For the sake of your family, to keep safe from abuse and addiction, say no. For the sake of witnessing to the lost, the best testimony you can have is not to be messing with alcohol. Have that self-discipline. You know, deny yourself, as the Lord says, doesn't he?

Don't indulge yourself in something that's questionable. Rather, choose that which is holy and right. Avoid temptation. Don't go down that slippery slope. Think of modern alcohol content. The fact is, modern alcohol is much, much higher in alcohol content than ancient wine would have been anyway.

[ 59 : 20 ] Lesser proportion of alcohol in the wine of the ancient times than modern alcohol, which is really enriched and it's supplemented. It's much higher percentage alcohol content. So we're not talking the same thing anyway. There's a lot of health risks, as we talked about, and really there's a sense of stewardship too. Why would you waste your money on alcohol? It's a poor stewardship. Rather, use your money for something constructive, something useful. Think of what our Lord has taught to us, to beware lest your heart be overcharged with that drunkenness. You know, look after your heart.

Look after your spiritual well-being. Choose the sober life. Titus 2 talks about how we should live soberly. We should live soberly. So our Lord's come to deliver us, not for us to be indulging in that which is questionable. There's many voices, many quotes we could take from history. You could do a search and I'm sure you'll find hundreds more quotes. So these are just some that some renowned people have said. Shakespeare said, alcohol is a poison men take into the mouth to steal away the brain.

Alcohol is the devil in solution. Strong drink is more destructive than war, pestilence and famine. It's distilled damnation. It's a cancer in human society, says Abraham Lincoln, eating out its vitals and threatening its destruction. It's a cancer. Here's what someone said about the word bar.

The name of each saloon's a bar, the fittest of its names by far. A bar to heaven, a door to hell. Whoever named it, named it well. A bar to manliness and wealth. A door to want and broken health. A door to honour, pride and fame. A door to sin and grief and shame. A door to hope. A bar to prayer.

A door to darkness and despair. A door to honoured useful life. A door to brawling, senseless strife. A door to all that's true and brave. A door to every drunkard's grave. A door to joys that home imparts. A door to tears and aching hearts. A bar to heaven. A door to hell. Whoever named it, named it well. The bar. It's a place we should not be.

[ 61 : 44 ] Rather, let's aspire to a higher standard. Think about it. Whether we eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Abstaining from alcohol, it's not a legalism. It's wisdom. It's love. It's leadership.

It's the right thing. We should be shining as lights. The Bible says, be not amongst the wine beavers. Don't hang around that crowd. And we're told that wine is a mocker. It's a deceiving issue. Let's not be deceived. It's going to suck you in and con you. Mark Tossel says, abstinence is the only option for a spiritual Christian. It's the best decision is to abstain. It's better to never to taste alcohol than to risk even one moment of drunkenness.

One life led astray or one stain on the name of Christ. So there's so many warnings about the evils of drinking, of drunkards. And if we just honestly would take the Bible as read, it's very, very plain. I put to you that there's no question in my mind that the best choice is not to drink. A bit of a summary here. Israel did without wine for 40 years. I can do without it for a lifetime. The priests of the Lord did without wine in service. I as a priest of the Lord can too.

Every believer is a priest. The drink offering was poured out before the Lord. So is my life poured out for him. The Nazarite vow was voluntary, total abstinence. I make the same voluntary vow.

The kings of Israel ruled better without drinking. I am a king unto the Lord and his people. Daniel and his companions were abstainers from Babylonish wine. I am a total abstainer in this Babylonish system. The temple of God was not to be defiled. I am his temple, holy unto the Lord.

[ 63 : 44 ] The Rechabites knew a life of total abstinence. So can I. The apostles contended for a life of soberness and temperance. So do I. Paul's consecration was total abstinence rather than to stumble others.

This is mine also. So there's decisions we can make. Just like the heroes of the faith, just like those men of God that have gone before us, just like the Bible principles that are very plain, we can make a decision. Hey, I'm not going to touch it. I'm not going to touch it.

To drink or not to drink, that is the question. So in the light of all of these things, hopefully you've been encouraged to consider this decision for yourself. You've got to make your own decision. And you might have a different decision to me. You might have an opposite decision, a contrary decision to me. But we've all got to be accountable to God, don't we? And I'm not condemning those that might take a different decision to me.

We've all got to make our own mind up. Based on the weight of the scriptures, based on the warnings and the exhortations and the whole tenor of the word of God, I would urge you to not drink. As for me and my house, we believe that practising voluntary total abstinence is the best route to take. And we see many examples of that in scripture. Like in your notes there, you've got some 75 scripture warnings. So we're not going to labour that. And for those that are watching, we'll put the references up later. But the Bible tells us over and over and over again, 75 scripture warnings against drinking alcohol.

[ 65 : 24 ] There's more scripture objectively condemning the use of alcoholic beverages than will be found on the subjects of lying, adultery, swearing, cheating, hypocrisy, pride, or even blasphemy.

75 warnings. 75 warnings. That's a lot of warnings, isn't it? Like if you were driving along the road, and there was a warning sign, in fact there were 75 warning signs to not travel that way, wouldn't you want to take notice of that? Wouldn't you want to actually say, actually that's a warning, I need to take heed of? And these warnings are shouting out to you, 75 warnings. How many warning signs do you need if you're travelling down a highway before you take heed? So take a look at that. There are 75 of them, and they're just some of them really. And you see over and over, again. The record is very clear that drinking alcohol is going to do you damage, it's going to hinder your testimony, it's going to stop your effectiveness for Christ, it's going to be a blot on your witness, on the influence you can have on others, and you might cause others to stumble.

So I'll just urge everyone to take heed of the 75 warnings here, and get a hold of these notes, and maybe mull it over, think it through, dig a bit deeper, and come to your own mind on it.

Certainly the weight of evidence is on the side of not drinking, not drinking at all. The scriptures that the moderate camp would try to use are very questionable, and you could argue they're not to do with alcohol. The ones that they say are justifying it. It's really quite plain, I think.

[ 67 : 05 ] So let's pray. Lord, we thank you that in all of these things that we've heard tonight, that there is grace, Lord, that you can help us if we have got an alcohol problem, if we are inclined to be tempted, Lord, you can help us to get victory. And Lord, we thank you that there's no condemnation here in Christ, that for everyone that is on this journey of faith, that we can know your grace and help to overcome, that we can get deliverance and victory. Lord, that there is your power to help us to get strong and to not choose anything that's going to be questionable. Lord, we know that drunkenness is very plainly a sin. That's very clear in the word of God. We pray that you'd help us to not even go a little bit that way, but rather to choose the highest path. Lord, especially that we pray that if there's any that might be watching this later, that they'll put their trust in Christ as their Lord and Saviour, that they'll know your saving power that sets the captives free. Lord, that we can have an eternal life that's forever guaranteed in heaven. Even if we were a drunkard, it says that such were some of you that we're not counted that anymore, that we can be set free and know your deliverance power. Lord, we praise you for all these things. In Jesus' name. Amen.