

## Drinking

Contrary to popular belief, the Bible *never* states that drinking is a sin. It *does* place limits on the activity and it is these limits that give rise to their application across the board to any activity, like drinking, that can become habit forming (drugs, gluttony, etc.).

When examining scriptural prohibitions against certain drinking practices you must first examine the types of drinks that were consumed. The following words are used in scripture to indicate ‘drinks’:

1. In the Old Testament (OT) the word most often translated as “wine” is the Hebrew word (YAH-yin) meaning ‘effervesce’. Rather than state where all it is found we will say it is used where the below words are not used.
2. The second most frequently used word (tee-ROSHE) means ‘fresh squeezed grape juice’ and does not refer to an intoxicating drink. It is translated as ‘wine’, or ‘new wine’, but has the effect of ‘Welch’s Grape Juice’. This is the drink that is actually promoted by God. He provides it, blesses it, and required its use in ceremony. [Gen.27:28; Num.18:12; Deu.7:13; 18:4; 28:51; 33:28; Jud.9:13; 2Ki.18:32; 2Chr.31:5; 32:28; Neh.10:37,39; 13:5,12; Ps.4:7; Pr.3:10; Isa.24:7; 36:17; 62:8; Jer.31:12; Hos.2:8,9,22; 4:11; 7:14; 9:2,4; 14:7; Joel 1:10; 2:19,24; Mic.6:15; Hag.1:11; Zec.9:17]
3. Another word (aw-SEES) means ‘fresh-squeezed (trodden) grape juice’ and refers to fermented ‘new wine.’ [Isa.49:26; Joel 1:5; 3:18; Amos 9:13]
4. Strong wine is translated by a word (shay-kawr’) meaning ‘intoxicant.’ [Nu.28:7]
5. A Chaldean word (kham-AR) is also used and simply means ‘wine.’ [Ezr.6:9, 7:22; Dan.5:1,2,4]
6. A common mixture (wine, water, spices) term (mam-SAWK) is translated as ‘mixed wine.’ [Pr.23:30]
7. ‘Usual drink’ is the definition of one word (so-BEH). [Isa.1:22]
8. Another Hebrew word (KHER-mer) means ‘fermenting wine’ (red, pure wine). [Isa.27:2]
9. Finally, the last Hebrew word (aw-NAWB) meaning ‘born of fruit’ and referring to wine. [Hos.3:1]
10. The most frequent New Testament word (OY-nos) refers to an alcoholic ‘wine’ and is the word used whenever the next words are not used.
11. Reference [Acts 2:13] to a sweet intoxicating wine is given by a word (GLYOO-koos) which we today have inherited to mean ‘sweet.’
12. Finally, a word (PAR-oy-nos) that is translated as ‘staying near wine’ and refers to one with a drinking problem. [1Tim. 3:3; Tit.1:7]

There were legitimate, medicinal uses of intoxicating drinks. Wine was used:

- as a sedative [Pr.31:6,7],
- to relieve pain [Pr.31:6; Ma.27:48; Mk.15:23],
- and to treat gastric disorders [1Tim.5:23].

Drinking grape juice was common at meals [Ma.26:27-29; Mk.14:22-25; Lu.22:17-20] and at special occasions [Jn.2:9,10] an alcoholic beverage was used.

Even for all the legitimate uses of intoxicating drinks, God does caution against its abuse. The following cautions are *applied* to our culture from the listed references:

1. Those in the ministry (be as broad, or as specific as you like) while in the performance of their duties (again, as broad, or as specific as you like). [Lev.10:9; Eze.44:21]
2. Government and other 'authorities' (be as broad as you like) because of the consequences of their decisions. [Pr.31:4]
3. Those believers who wish not to forget who has delivered them. [Deu.29:6]
4. Believers who prefer to abstain as a testimony to others of God's holiness. [Lev.10:9; Eze.44:21]
5. The person who thinks he/she can 'handle it.' One who does not have a sober respect for the effects of alcohol. [Pr.21:1; Isa.5:21,22; 28:7]
6. Problem drinkers who are aware of their problem. [Pr.21:17; Hos.4:11; Eph.5:18]
7. Overindulgence due to the after effects, [Pr.23:24-32; Isa.5:11; 28:1,3; Jer.23:9]
8. In situations where you may be allowed to drink from a doctrinal standpoint, but doing so may cause a less mature believer to misunderstand and draw (and then apply) the wrong conclusions. [Rom.14:21]
9. For those who serve the church there is a caution against frequent sipping (tippling, topper, etc.). [1Tim.3:3,8; Tit.1:7]

These same admonitions would apply not only to drinking, but to other vices as well. The real issue is 'who is in charge'? You may be hooked on alcohol, drugs, sex, potato chips, or anything else for that matter. The question is:

"Do you control it, or does it control you?"