

## VII. Drinking And Drug Abuse

Most people do not think about drinking the same way they think about drug abuse. The truth is that they should.

### A. Abuse

What is abuse? It is literally an off-use. It's a misuse, a use away from what ought to be. Webster states, "To put to a wrong or improper use." So let's clarify what we are and are not talking about. Most drugs have some rightful, therapeutic use. Their intended use is to improve the quality of life or treat ailments. Such proper use of substances is mentioned in scripture:

*Luke 7:46*

*Luke 10:3*

*1 Timothy 5:23*

*James 5:14*

We are not talking about the proper use of things; we are talking about improper use. So, how are substances used wrong today?

#### 1. Wrong amount or dose

A doctor may prescribe or we may otherwise rightfully purchase some drug. All drugs have a recommended dosage for proper use. If we use the substances for longer periods or in higher amounts, we are abusing, as is often done when a doctor prescribes a drug to help someone with a sleeping problem.

#### 2. Wrong user

If we take medications that a doctor prescribed for someone else's problem, we are abusing.

#### 3. Wrong substance

Some drugs are a by-product of research. Drugs are not invented as much as they are discovered. New compounds are formulated and tested on animals and human subjects. Some are found to have harmful or unpredictable effects, which a doctor would never prescribe. These substances enter illegal markets for no other use than abuse. Examples are the drugs ecstasy and crack cocaine.

#### 4. Wrong use

Some substances are not drugs at all but are nevertheless capable of producing effects similar to drugs. They have other legitimate uses that have nothing to do with medicines or medical research. Examples are sniffing glue and paint.

#### 5. Wrong purpose

In many cases, a substance is used simply for recreation or personal enjoyment. We then have to consider the legitimacy of using the substance itself. As a Christian, our standard of determining this is God's word. For example, skin ointments are used for a soothing effect, and the Bible makes no indication that this is sinful. On the other hand, alcoholic beverages are also used for a soothing effect: the purpose of intoxication, but the Bible has plenty to say about its sinfulness. This also is abuse, and our study will look at this in greater detail.

### B. A Clinical View of Drug Abuse

#### 1. Classifications

All drugs are used to influence the mind and body in an attempt to alter the emotions, change the senses, essentially fool the body, and escape reality. There are three basic classifications of drugs that are abused:

##### Hallucinogens

This group of drugs includes "psychedelics." Researchers do not fully understand how they work in the nervous system, but they affect auditory and visual perceptions creating imaginary of objects with no connection to reality. Marijuana is in this category.

## **Stimulants**

This group includes drugs called "amphetamines." They work to increase the rate of signals transmitted in the nervous system. They thus cause a heightened awareness or sensitivity with an increased heart rate. Caffeine is in this category.

## **Depressants**

This group includes drugs called "barbiturates." They work to chemically block signals between nerve cells. They thus cause sluggishness and sleepiness. Alcohol is in this category.

All of these drugs have varying capabilities of addicting us or causing bodily harm, if abused. Our studies in morality thus far have shown that to glorify God in our bodies, temples of God bought by the blood of Christ, we should not intentionally do ourselves harm. Furthermore, we have seen that addiction is a lack of self-control, which is sin. Out of all, caffeine and alcohol are the most abused drugs today. Let's take both under consideration.

## **2. Caffeine**

Caffeine is a naturally occurring compound in plants, especially cocoa nuts, coffee beans, and tea leaves. It therefore shows up in a broad range of our food products. To varying degrees among different people, it causes the body to produce more adrenaline, a hormone that naturally kicks up our energy level when we are frightened. It also chemically works similarly to heroin and cocaine, which probably gives it the ability to addict but to a very much milder degree. This is likely why some beverage companies intentionally add caffeine to their product to get customers to keep buying it.

Caffeine can kill in a large dose equivalent to drinking 80 to 100 cups of coffee in rapid succession: not an easy feat. The greatest practical long-term health problem associated with caffeine abuse is sleep deprivation, which can lead to irritability. Once addicted, attempts to break the addiction can lead to fatigue, depression, and headaches. Being a stimulant, caffeine does not produce debilitating effects. No automobile accident ever resulted from too much caffeine consumption. Homes have never been wrecked as a result of caffeine abuse.

Caffeine use is nowhere explicitly mentioned in scripture, but then, again, neither is smoking. However, we have seen that scripture condemns addiction of any kind. If we are addicted to caffeine, to us, it is sin. Some researchers today suggest that if a person drinks four or more cups of coffee a day, they probably have a dependency problem.

## **3. Alcohol**

In the United States today there are at least 80 million people who use alcoholic beverages. Of that number, it is conservatively estimated that 7 million are what could be called "problem drinkers," and out of those, at least 3 million are alcoholics. A recent survey indicates that, of college students who drink, 4 out of 5 men and 2 out of 3 women began to drink while they were in high school. Even if statistics didn't bear it out, experience teaches that people generally begin to drink when they are young – about high school age.

Dr. T. Mark Lloyd, of Gainesville, Florida, writes, "Alcohol is a drug which has both immediate (acute) effects and more longer lasting (chronic) effects. Usually, it is the immediate effects that the drinker is seeking. The first organ system that shows a rapid effect from alcohol is the brain. The brain is quite compartmentalized, and there are certain areas that perform different functions. The frontal portion of our brain, called the frontal lobe (that part of the brain which anatomically and neurologically separates man from other animals), controls our inhibitions, among other things. It so happens that this is the portion of the brain quickly affected by alcohol. This is why we see a person becoming 'happier', louder, and more boisterous. He begins to do things he would not normally do. (By the way, this is not the point at which a person is as yet defined by all criteria as being drunk.) This is also why it is so very dangerous for the young and others who otherwise under normal conditions have proper sexual inhibitions, but may lose these inhibitions while drinking, thus engaging in sexual activities they would not normally do. Now we can begin to see why people like alcohol and it's immediate effects. Other acute effects are visual disturbances, loss of balance, and loss of motor coordination. If questioned closely, law enforcement officials will tell you anywhere from 50 to 90 percent of all automobile accidents are a direct or indirect result of someone being under the influence of alcohol, not necessarily drunk, either, but just drinking and not in total control of all faculties or not totally aware of circumstances."

Dr. Lloyd continues, "The ill effects of alcohol also have their longer lasting results. The most common problem is that of cirrhosis or loss of liver function. The liver is the organ in the body that detoxifies alcohol. If taken in abundance and for a long period of time, the liver can and will be destroyed by this drug. This type of individual is not a very pretty sight to see. Usually at this stage he also has chronic brain damage which is the direct result of the alcohol as well. The gastrointestinal tract is the next most common organ that is affected by alcohol. Diseases such as ulcers, stomach inflammation, and severe bleeding from the esophagus or stomach can occur as a result of alcoholic consumption. The heart can most definitely become adversely involved from it's chronic use. Secondly, the pancreas, muscles, skin, and a number of other organs are also involved destructively."

## C. What does the Bible Say of the Effects of Alcohol?

### 1. Harmful – Physically

*Proverbs 23:29-34*

- Woe, sorrow, contentions, wounds
- Stomach ailments
- Hallucinations, redness of eyes
- Silly talking, impaired speech
- Disorientation, confusion, and dizziness
- Lack of sensibility
- Addiction

### 2. Harmful – Financially

*Proverbs 21:17; 23:21*

- Poverty is his.
- He shall be a poor man; he shall not be rich.

### 3. Harmful – Mentally

*Proverbs 31:4, 5*

- Forgetfulness
- Adversely affects judgment

### 4. What Can Be Lost?

- Noah lost his decency (Genesis 9:20-29).
- Lot's daughters lost their virginity (Genesis 19:30-36).
- David lost his integrity in the case of Uriah (2 Samuel 11:13).
- Belshazzar lost his kingdom (Daniel 5).
- Ahasuerus lost his wife and his self-respect. (Esther 1:10-21).
- We can lose our influence (Titus 2:7, 8).
- If we engage in this kind of activity, we will lose our souls (1 Corinthians 6:10).

## D. The Bible Condemns Drinking

Consider carefully these two passages:

*NKJ Galatians 5:19-21* Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

*NKJ 1 Peter 4:3* For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles -- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

Lets take a look at the words underlined above in the original Greek text:

- Sorcery [PHARMAKEIA] (from whence the English word "pharmacy" is derived) – J. H. Thayer defines this as (1) the use or the administering of drugs (2) poisoning (3) sorcery, magical arts, often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it, and (4) metaphorically, the deceptions and seductions of idolatry.
- Drunkenness (Galatians 5) [METHE] – This is defined as drunkenness, habitual intoxication, deep drinking, drunken bouts.

- Drunkenness (1 Peter 4) [OINOPHLUGIA] – Thayer simply defines it as drunkenness. The King James Version accurately renders it "excess of wine," indicating habitual intoxication. It marks a step in advance of the drunkenness (METHE) mentioned in Galatians 5.
- Revelries [KOMOS] – J. H. Thayer defines this as (1) a revel, carousal (1a) a nocturnal and riotous procession of half drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honour of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before houses of male and female friends; hence used generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry.
- Drinking parties [POTOS] – Be careful not to read this as "drunken parties;" that would be KOMOS. Literally, POTOS is a "drinking" without reference to amount. The verb form is POTIZO, "to give to drink" without regard to amount. R.C. Trench says, "not of necessity excessive." He further explains that POTOS is related to words of excess in that it gives "opportunity for excess". This is cocktail party drinking, sipping of wine, and social drinking. This includes consumption of such a small amount that no alteration in behavior is detectable.

There is a progressiveness evident in these words. They describe every aspect of drunkenness today from just casually tasting wine, to drinking to the point of merrymaking, to getting the beer-buzz, to being completely drunk, and to passing out in your own vomit. Scripture condemns them all.

The Bible is full of references to drunkenness too numerous to begin to mention. We will suffice to say that it is never cast in a favorable light by the inspired writers and is often associated with harlotry, idolatry, indecency, shamefulness, sorrow, and destruction.

Any substances that would behave like alcohol to similarly lower inhibitions, dull the senses, alter our perceptions, harm the body, or addict us are also indicted by scripture on a matter of principle.

We shouldn't need to mention that underage drinking and the use of illegal substances is sin because it also violates civil law, to which a Christian is to be in subjection.

*Romans 13:1-6*

## **E. Why do Young People Drink or Abuse Drugs?**

### **1. Curiosity**

A lot of young folks drink and abuse drugs because they want to see what it is like.

### **2. Peer Pressure**

Maybe the greatest number of young people drink or use drugs because they want to be accepted. Everybody wants to be liked. It is rare to find a young person who first drinks or first takes drugs alone. Generally speaking, these are things that are, at least initially, done with others. We all need to realize that young people are under a lot of peer pressure. Young people need to know that others understand and are ready to help. Drug abuse is certainly not the answer.

### **3. Unhappiness**

Maybe you just don't like the way things are. You don't like it at home – mom and dad just don't understand. You don't like it at school – you don't see the point of it. You don't like it at church – you feel like you don't have any real friends. Some young people are deceived into thinking that drinking or drugs can ease that unhappiness for a little while.

### **4. Influences of Society**

We shouldn't jump to blame our environment, but it is a contributing factor. Television and advertisements teach us that you can take a pill for almost anything: if you can't sleep, take a pill; if your stomach is upset, take a pill; if you're constipated, take a pill; if you have a headache, take a pill, and so on.

The music we choose to listen to has an influence on us. In the 1960's the drug culture began, and we would deceive ourselves to deny that it was influenced by music. Lots of music today still promotes drug abuse and escaping from reality.

You can probably come up with a hundred other reasons why young people turn to alcohol or other drugs. Please understand, it doesn't make sense to drink or abuse drugs. It will take away your health, your happiness, your mind, your friends, and most importantly, your soul.

## **F. Excuses to Justify Drinking and Drug Abuse**

"The Bible only condemns drunkenness; moderation is permitted."

This is always stated by a person who hasn't really studied the Bible on the matter. We've shown this to be false.

"Titus 3:18 actually says deacons can have a little wine."

"Not addicted to much wine" does not imply that a little is okay. How can you be addicted to only a little, anyway?

"Jesus made wine (John 2:1-11)."

The New Testament Greek word for "wine" [OINOS] is used for grape juice that either does or does not contain alcohol. You have to determine from the context whether or not it is alcoholic. There is nothing in this context that would remotely suggest that Jesus must have made intoxicating wine at this feast.

In English, we use the word "drunk" to mean both the past tense of drink and the present tense of being intoxicated. However, in the Greek, there are different words. The word PINO refers simply to consuming liquid; the word METHUO means to be intoxicated. John 2 does not state that the wedding guests were drunk (METHUO) on the wine Jesus made.

"Marijuana is not addictive."

This may be true, but marijuana obviously impairs sensibility. Clinical studies also clearly show that continued use can cause bodily harm. These reasons alone violate scriptural principles.

"Marijuana does not actually 'lead to doing other drugs;' that is a myth."

The point is not that marijuana itself leads to other things but the general interest in abusing illegal drugs of any kind. If I have associated myself with someone who will illegally sell me marijuana or smoke it with me, I am in the wrong crowd. They will not have a good influence on me.

## **G. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion**

1. If it takes four beers to "get drunk," how drunk are you if only one beer is consumed?
2. Does any of the word studies in this lesson deal with being only partially drunk?
3. If drunkenness is engaged only in the privacy of my own home, how might that have a bad effect on others not in my household?
4. Would you see any danger in drinking non-alcoholic beer out with your friends?
5. How can drunkenness adversely effect a marriage relationship?
6. Can you think of ways television and movies have glamorized drinking?
7. Are there certain situations where drinking just a little alcohol would be okay?
8. What is missing in the popular "drink responsibly" promotion heard today?
9. For older young adults, when someone asks you why you're not drinking, what do you tell them?