

What can we drink?

Christians should be able to drink anything – water, wine, beer, coffee, tea, etc. – whatever in any quantity that does not cause health problems.

Can one drink too much of water to cause harm? Can a little liquor harm you? I come to writing on this topic because someone suggested it to me after reading my other article on “What can we eat?” published in November Vine.

The Bible tells us that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 6:19) This being so, it is obviously not right for us to harm our body – whether it is about eating unhealthy food or overloading with alcohol. Freedom to eat and drink does have its limits.

Drinking water



While doctors commonly advise drinking lots of water, there is a common-sense limit to it. It may surprise some that there is actually a medical condition called dilutional hyponatraemia, which can be fatal, due to drinking too much. Yes, it is about drinking too much water (especially at a single sitting) resulting in the body’s electrolyte imbalance.

While by common sense most people would be more likely to indulge in over-drinking of alcohol, the over-drinking of water is quite possible to people who suffer from polydipsia whereby they drink and drink to quench their excessive thirst to the point of over-hydration. If people can suffer from anorexia or bulimia, whereby they under-consume or over-consume food, it is quite imaginable for some people (even if rare) to suffer from plausible disorders that either alienate them from water or subject them to binge drinking (of water).

Even if you don’t get to that extreme, drinking too much water at night would still affect your sleep and hence your health.

So can we drink water anyhow? 😊

Approval of wine and beer

Water is essential for life, but it is not best to drink water only. Sometimes, you may do well to drink some wine for health, as Apostle Paul advised Timothy:

“Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.” (1 Tim. 5:23)

A website¹ lists 8 health benefits of drinking wine.

Evidently, the Bible itself does not forbid the drinking of wine, which does gladden human hearts. (Ps. 104:15) Wine connoisseurs know this, don't they?



Jesus did not preach against the drinking of wine. He even turned water into the best wine at a wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11), and incorporated wine into the sacrament of Holy Communion.

After the flood, the first thing Noah planted was a vineyard. (Gen. 9:20) In Exodus, the Promised Land is described as “a good land — a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey.” (Deu. 8:7-8) Abundant grapes are also alluded to in Num. 13:23. It must be a huge cluster to require two men to carry it on a pole between them. It is quite conceivable that wine and beer would be the ordinary produce of the abundant wheat, barley, grapes and other fruits. God provided the abundance for man's satisfaction; and it is reasonable to affirm the case that the drinking of wine and beer is never a prohibition.

Drinking alcohol itself is not sin, but drunkenness is! (Ga. 5:21)

Wine and Beer in Bible not non-alcoholic



Some people argue that the wine referred in the Bible is grape juice and not the distilled liquor with varying alcohol content that we have today. I beg to disagree. If it is grape juice, why not just call it simply “juice” instead of “wine”. As Matt. 9:17 tells us, new wine would be put into new wineskins for preservation. Surely this alludes to potent fermentation in the course of preservation that would damage any old wineskin. In the wedding at Cana where Jesus turned water into wine, the drink served out finally was the best wine, not just any ordinary wine. Logically, the

¹ <http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/8-health-benefits-of-drinking-wine>

best wine that thrilled the drinkers couldn't be simple juice or newly-fermented drink.

As further evidence that "wine" mentioned in the Bible is wine (alcoholic) and not unfermented drink, Proverbs 20:1, Galatians 5:21 and 1 Timothy 3:8, mention about the unsafe effect of drinking too much.²

As for beer, it is definitely a drink produced with the fermentation of malt which itself comes from various types of grains, and it contains alcohol albeit to a lower concentration than distilled liquor. Let's take a look at Isa. 56:12 translated two ways:

- "Come," each one cries, "let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better." – NIV



- Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. - KJV

The beer in NIV is mentioned as "strong drink" in KJV.

From the following verses, it is also discernible that the wine and beer referred to in the Bible were capable of leading drinkers to grief:

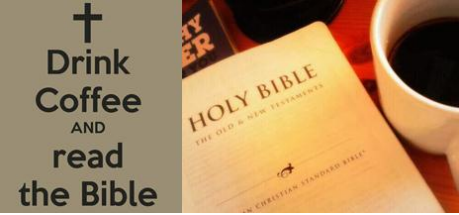
- Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. – Prov. 20:1
- Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery ... – Eph 5:18

Drinking Coffee and tea

I am a teetotaler, but I enjoy coffee and tea; even a cup late at night would not affect me with insomnia. However, there are people who cannot tolerate a drop at

² The warnings associated with drinking in the Bible are about drinking in excess rather than total abstinence.

bedtime. Does the Bible say that I should not drink coffee or tea? NO, there is no



mention of drinking coffee, tea or consumption of caffeine in the Bible. Probably, these items did not feature in the lives of the people in Bible times.

The Mormons do not drink coffee and tea. It is because of a “law of health” that they believe God had given to Joseph Smith, the founder of the Latter Day Saint movement of which Mormonism is a principal branch. It has nothing to do with the Bible.

Caffeine does have health benefits; a website³ lists the top 10 of them, one of which is that “Caffeine is better than sleep when you need to be alert while driving.” (Those who drive, take note.)

Conclusion

By the enumerations above, I hold the view that any of the beverages mentioned is alright for our consumption because there is no outright ban against them in the Word of God.

Where health is concerned, there are always contradictory warnings – some say coffee is good; some say, bad. Some say carbohydrates are good for energy; some say they make you fat. Different experts have different opinions; so how? Personally, as far as food and drinks are concerned, I always believe in the idea that moderation is apt if abstinence is unnecessary or undesired, and if there is no absolute prohibition in the Word of God.

BUT ON THE OTHER HAND ...

A host of health benefits have been ascribed to drinking eight glasses of water a day. It is said that:

- It helps weight loss by suppressing appetite and boosting the body's metabolism so it can burn off more calories
- It can prevent headaches and fainting caused by dehydration
- It prevents renal and urinary infections - going to the toilet more frequently will help flush out the bacteria that cause them
- It has been proven to improve the condition of nails
- Being dehydrated causes skin to dry - so drinking water helps to moisturise it

What is moderate and acceptable is never a certain measure, but a relative one according to one’s body condition. A moderate glass of beer for an adult female in the family way may well be a lethal excess for her unborn child. Christians should

³ <http://www.energyfiend.com/top-10-caffeine-health-benefits>

be conscious of the levels that suit them appropriately and be cognizant of their body's and mind's signals to hold themselves back from going overboard, to heed the warning at 1 Cor. 6:19. It is wrong to drink with nary a care for your health and sobriety, and to cast the label "moderately" as an excuse to fling yourself in watering holes and fling your Christian testimony out of the window. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Do not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is a drunkard. (1 Cor. 5:11)

If you wish to abstain from any drink, it is fine if it does not deny your body the essential nourishment. If you wish to drink with restraint without bringing harm to your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, it is fine. Whatever your choice, you may still face contrarian opinions – people complain when you drink and people complain when you don't, like what Jesus commented in Matthew 11:18-19.

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