



## Is it OK to drink alcohol?

I touched on the question of consuming alcohol in my article [“What can we drink?”](#) published in the [Dec 2013](#) issue of The Vine.

Is drinking a good idea? Recently, this question popped up again from someone who was concerned about another person’s consumption of alcohol every night. It prompted me to survey the Bible again to refresh my mind on any related advice therein. I come across the following biblical mentions about wine:

- Wine can be evil (Prov 20:1; Isa 5:11, 22)

Prov 20:1 says that wine, not the drinker, is the mocker.

So, wine as a mocking drink has the potential of making a mockery of the drinker who then makes a fool of himself/herself when inebriated.

Isa 5:11, 22 describe those who “run after their drinks ... till they are inflamed with wine” and “those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks.” These are no casual social drinkers, but alcoholics who rise early in the morning and stay up late at night, losing their self-control and thereby inviting woe.

- Christians should not get drunk, but be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18)

We are to be filled with the Spirit (of God), not the spirit (a.k.a. alcohol).

Being drunk on spirit may give us a temporary exhilaration in the flesh with blurred judgment and descent into worldly foolhardiness. However, being filled with the Spirit gives us fullness of spiritual exhilaration, engaging our minds with the right tone of wisdom and enduring happiness.

- Self-control for church leaders (1 Tim 3:3, 8)

Apostle Paul does not advise abstinence from wine altogether, but counsels church leaders on safe drinking with moderation using the words “not given to drunkenness” and “not indulging in much wine.”

- Wine has its positive values (1 Tim 5:23; Ps 104:15; Prov 31:6)

A little wine is good for the stomach and minimise illnesses. It can cheer people up. A sensible use of it can refresh frail bodies and invigorate minds.

- Wine as a blessing (Gen 14:18; 1 Sam 16:20)

Wine was a blessing, with bread to feed the hungry troops of Abram’s triumphant return. (Gen 14:18)

In Isa 55:1-3, wine was also a representation of spiritual blessing in a banquet invitation for a covenant renewal.

You can find more references to wine in the Bible and realise that complete abstinence from alcohol is not a biblical injunction. Alcohol (in moderation) does have its benefits. It is the abuse of alcohol (drunkenness, addiction) that is proscribed. If a person drinks to the point of losing self-control of his actions, or becomes alcohol-dependent, then the signal is obvious that drinking is bad for him/her.

Is there anyone tempted to be over-fond of wine or too free with the bottle, who blames his beer buddies or the alcohol vapours in his surroundings?

Our brother, Martin Cheah, had worked in a brewery for 39 years until his retirement this year. He admitted that he could only drink 2 glasses of beer before feeling a little high, and that he has stopped drinking beer for more than 15 years. Blessed is our brother Martin that despite being often in the company of people who included beer-guzzlers, and the tempting daily sight of beer at his workplace, he has never been tempted to “be over-fond of wine” or “be too free with the bottle.” (1 Tim 3:3, 8 MSG)



The Bible says, *“No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he’ll never let you be pushed past your limit; he’ll always be there to help you come through it.”* – 1 Cor 10:13



The Bible also instructs, *“Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.”* – Prov 23: 20-21

In reality, as we often read in the news, intemperate drinkers have found themselves clothed in prison garbs. ☹️

So, is it OK to drink alcohol? My view is: It is OK only if you do not abuse it or get into its harm’s way.

John Lee

**Worldwide, 3 million deaths every year result from harmful use of alcohol, this represent 5.3 % of all deaths.**

Read more at

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/alcohol>