



"Position Paper—Alcohol & the Christian"

We believe the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and life. Therefore, we hope to continually grow in understanding Scripture and applying it to our lives. This brief position paper seeks to aid the Christian in this task as it relates to the topic of alcohol.

I. Alcohol is a good gift from God, and is to be used/enjoyed for his glory.

A. As the creator, God has endowed his world with all manner of delightful things which are, in and of themselves, good (Genesis 1:31).

1. God's creativity and generosity are seen through his generous gifts which ought to lead all persons to give thanks and praise to God (Matt 5:44ff; Rom 1:20, 2:4; 1 Tim 4:1-5; etc.).

B. Alcohol is mentioned in Scripture as a particular blessing that God bestows upon his people.

1. Psalm 104:14-15, "You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and *wine to gladden the heart of man*, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart."
 - a. Notice in this passage that the Scriptures are clear not only about the delight that is to be had in consuming alcohol (see also Psalm 4:7) but also that wine can have a good and pleasurable affect upon the heart.
2. Deuteronomy 7:13, "He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain *and your wine*." (See also Gen 27:28, 49:11; Deut 11:14; Prov 3:10; etc.)

C. Alcohol was used as an offering to God in Israel's sacrificial system.

1. Leviticus 23:13, "And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and *the drink offering with it shall be of wine*, a fourth of a hin." (See also Ex 29:40; Num 15:5, etc.)
2. Numbers 28:7, "Its drink offering shall be a quarter of a hin for each lamb. In the Holy Place you shall pour out *a drink offering of strong drink* to the LORD."

D. Various forms of alcohol were employed in Israel's worship & celebration of God.

1. Deuteronomy 14:23-26, " And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. ²⁴ And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, ²⁵ then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses ²⁶ and spend the money for whatever you desire- oxen or sheep or *wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves*. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household."

II. Alcohol may be misused in sinful ways, so that it dishonors God.

A. Alcohol has the potential to be abused by our sinful hearts. Moreover, sinful abuse of alcohol is often associated with other sins, which in some cases it facilitates.

1. Proverbs 4:17, "For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the *wine of violence*."
2. Proverbs 20:1, "Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."
3. Isaiah 5:11, "Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!"
4. Isaiah 5:22-23, "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, ²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right!"
5. Hosea 4:10-12, "They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD to cherish ¹¹ whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding."

B. Excess alcohol consumption is sinful because it leads to intoxication/drunkenness which is forbidden by God.

1. Ephesians 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."
2. Proverbs 23:29-32, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? ³⁰ Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. ³¹ Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. ³² In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder."
3. 1 Peter 4:3, "For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry."

C. Those who make a practice of drunkenness bring about God's wrath, and have no share in his kingdom.

1. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

III. Christians should enjoy alcohol with wisdom and thankfulness unto God's glory.

A. As the redeemer, God will renew the entirety of his world so that it functions according to his original intention. Alcohol, in particular, is used by God to represent this restoration and will be enjoyed in the new heavens and the new earth.

1. Joel 3:18, "And in that day the mountains *shall drip sweet wine*, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim." (See also Amos 9:13-14).
2. Isaiah 55:1, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, *buy wine and milk without money and without price*."
3. Matthew 26:29, "I tell you *I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*." (See also Rev 19:9)

4. Luke 5:33-39, "And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, *but yours eat and drink.*" ... He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts *new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed.* ³⁸ *But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.* ³⁹ *And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'*" (See also John 2:10-11, where Jesus turns water to wine and in doing so "manifests his glory.")

B. The way Jesus used alcohol is an example for Christians to emulate.

1. Jesus participated in regular social events which involved alcohol. In fact, the first sign he used to manifest his glory was to save the day by changing water to wine at a wedding reception (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank alcoholic beverages to the glory of God. Apparently this practice, coupled with the company of misfits that followed Jesus, led to an unfair criticism at the hands of his opponents. After a "great banquet" Jesus was accused of being a drunkard. Jesus' response demonstrates that their accusations were without merit. Nevertheless, we shouldn't miss the obvious--Jesus went to parties and drank alcohol.
 - a. Matt 11:19, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."
3. Jesus used wine in the Lord's Supper to signify the shedding of his blood, the blood of the new covenant. What's more, he commands that his followers, "drink of it, all of you..."
 - a. Some of earliest Christians sinned by getting drunk at this fellowship meal (1 Corinthians 11:21-22). In correcting this abuse the Apostle Paul did not change the elements of the meal by removing the use of alcohol, but instead called worshipers to partake in a worthy way and to remember the significance of the meal.

C. God's people are called to live all of life in his service. While the kingdom of God is not a matter of drinking or eating, even in this area of life we are called to give thanks and live as it pleasing to Christ.

1. Food & sex are analogous to alcohol as they are created as good, have the potential to be misused, and are now arenas for Christians to live unto God's glory.
2. Some Christians continue to struggle with sin in these areas and their brothers and sisters should work to build them up in the Lord.
 - a. Romans 14: 17-21, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble."
3. 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

- a.** May our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified as we seek to honor him with our use of alcohol and in every other part of life!