

The Curse of Strong Drink

I want to take the time to speak about the curse of strong drink with the hope you will make a lifestyle decision to avoid the personal consumption of intoxicating beverage. Furthermore, I challenge you to avoid family, social settings where alcohol is consumed.

I believe if you read this short sermon today it may well save someone from a life of ruin. This is certainly my motivation.

I doubt that many people really stop to think about the devastation alcohol consumption works upon our nation. Alcohol is a social evil that is literally destroying the lives of multiplied millions of Americans.

There is no good thing to say about the industry as a whole and there is no good justification for the consumption of alcohol in any form. Consider some of these facts about alcohol:

Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the United States- 17.6 million people, or one in every 12 adults, suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence along with several million more who engage in risky, binge drinking patterns that could lead to alcohol problems.

More than half of all adults have a family history of alcoholism or problem drinking, and more than 7 million children live in a household where at least one

parent is dependent on or has abused alcohol. Yet, for many people, the Facts About Alcohol and Alcoholism are not clear.

Facts About Alcohol

Alcohol abuse and alcoholism can affect all aspects of your life. Long-term alcohol use can cause serious health complications affecting virtually every organ in your body, including your brain. It can also damage your emotional stability, finances, career, and impact your family, friends and the people you work with.

To get a better understanding of how devastating alcoholism is in our country, here are a few figures from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC - 2012\)](#):

79,000 deaths are annually attributed to excessive alcohol use

Alcoholism is the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the nation

Up to 40% of all hospital beds in the United States (except for those being used by maternity and intensive care patients) are being used to treat health conditions that are related to alcohol consumption

Over time, excessive alcohol use, both in the form of heavy drinking or binge drinking, can lead to numerous health problems, chronic diseases, neurological impairments and social problems, including but not limited to:

Dementia, stroke and neuropathy

Cardiovascular problems, including myocardial infarction, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation and hypertension

Psychiatric problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicide

Social problems, including unemployment, lost productivity, family problems, violence including child maltreatment, fights and homicide

Unintentional injuries, such as motor-vehicle traffic crashes, falls, drowning, burns and firearm injuries.

Increased risk for many kinds of cancers, including liver, mouth, throat, larynx (voice box) and esophagus

Liver diseases, including fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis

Gastrointestinal problems, including pancreatitis and gastritis

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's): ALCOHOL:

Question: What is alcohol?

Answer: The alcohol that is consumed is ethyl alcohol (ethanol) and is produced by the fermentation of yeast, sugars and starches. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant drug and ethanol is the intoxicating ingredient found in beer, wine, and liquor.

Question: What is a “standard drink” of alcohol?

Answer: A standard alcohol drink contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol (0.6 ounces):

12-ounces of Beer or Cooler

8-ounces of Malt Liquor

5-ounces of Wine

1.5-ounces or “shot” of Distilled Spirits/Liquor (e.g., rum, gin, vodka, or whiskey).

(There can be some slight variation, but you get the idea)

Question: Isn't beer or wine safer to drink than liquor?

Answer: No. One 12-ounce beer has about the same amount of alcohol as one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5-ounce shot of liquor. What matters is the amount of alcohol consumed, not the type of alcoholic drink.

Question: How does alcohol affect a person?

Answer: As a central nervous system depressant drug, alcohol is rapidly absorbed by the stomach and small intestine into the bloodstream, and then circulated to every organ in the body (including the brain).

Question: How does alcohol leave the body?

Answer: Once absorbed into the bloodstream, the **Kidneys** eliminate 5% of alcohol in the urine, the **Lungs** exhale 5% of alcohol (detectable by breathalyzer) and the **Liver** breaks down the remaining 90% of alcohol. Alcohol is broken down (metabolized) by the liver at the average rate of one standard drink per hour and nothing can speed this up, including drinking coffee.

Question: What does “getting drunk” mean?

Answer: “Getting drunk” or becoming intoxicated results from drinking more alcohol than the body can break down, leaving the alcohol to circulate throughout the body. Alcohol intoxication can be harmful or risky for a variety of reasons:

Impaired brain function resulting in poor judgment, reduced reaction time, loss of balance, coordination, motor skills, or slurred speech.

Alcohol causes dilation of blood vessels producing a feeling of warmth but results in rapid loss of body heat.

Increased risk of certain cancers, stroke, and liver diseases (e.g., cirrhosis).

Damage to a developing fetus if consumed by a pregnant women.

Increased risk of motor-vehicle traffic crashes, violence, and other injuries.

Question: How do I know if it's okay to drink alcohol or how much?

Answer: The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend that if you choose to drink alcohol, do not exceed 1 drink per day for women or 2 drinks per day for men.

According to the Dietary Guidelines, the following people should not drink alcohol:

Children and adolescents under the age of 21.

Individuals of any age who cannot limit their drinking.

Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant.

Individuals who plan to drive a car, operate machinery, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination.

Individuals taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that can interact with alcohol.

Individuals with certain medical conditions.

Persons recovering from alcoholism.

Now let's consider some information on alcohol and crime:

While drinking and driving has received a great deal of public and media attention, the relationship between alcohol and crime, for both offenders and victims, has not received the same level of public attention. The relationship between alcohol and crimes including domestic abuse and violence, underage drinking, robbery, assault and sexual assault is clearly documented.

FACT: 5.3 million adults - 36% of those under correctional supervision - were drinking at the time of their conviction offense

Excessive drinking leads to criminal behavior

*The US Department of Justice (DOJ) estimated that a majority of criminal offenders were under the influence of **alcohol alone** when they committed their **crimes**.*

Federal research shows that for the 40% of convicted murderers being held in either jail or State prison, alcohol use was a factor in the homicide.

FACT: Alcohol is a factor in 40% of all violent crimes today

About 3 million violent crimes occur each year in which victims perceive the offender to have been drinking. Crimes include: rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault. About two-thirds of violent crimes are characterized as simple assaults.

Based on victim reports, alcohol use by the offender was a factor in:

37% of rapes and sexual assaults

15% of robberies

*27% of aggravated assaults, and
25% of simple assaults*

Now let's consider a few facts about drinking and driving:

FACT: *An estimated 32% of fatal car crashes involve an intoxicated driver or pedestrian. Drinking alcohol and driving simply do not go together. The human brain has to deal with many things and process countless data all the time. Alcohol affects attentiveness and one's ability to make quick decisions on the road, react to changes in the environment and execute specific, often difficult maneuvers behind the wheel. When drinking alcohol, driving becomes dangerous— and is potentially lethal!*

*Despite increased public awareness, drinking and drugged driving continues:
Nearly 13,000 people are killed each year in alcohol-related accidents
Hundreds of thousands more are injured
Alcohol-related crashes cost American taxpayers over \$100 billion
Over 1.4 million arrests for DWI each year (less than 1% of 159 million self-reported episodes of alcohol-impaired driving) and 780,000 are convicted
Two-thirds of those sentenced to incarceration are repeat offenders*

*All states in the U.S. have adopted .08% BAC (blood alcohol concentration) as the legal limit for operating a motor vehicle for drivers aged 21 years or older.
Drivers Under Age 21: **Drivers younger than 21 are not allowed to operate a motor vehicle with any level of alcohol in their system.**
The majority of drinking and driving deaths are due to drivers with a blood alcohol concentration, or BAC, of at least .10 BAC (blood alcohol concentration), the most commonly used definition of intoxication.*

How Does Alcohol Affect the Driver?

BAC of 0.02:

As the person reaches .02 they begin to experience some loss of judgment, relaxation and altered mood which results in a decline in visual functions and ability to perform two tasks at the same time.

BAC of 0.05:

Psychomotor performance is significantly impaired; slower eye movements occur; visual perception, reaction time and information processing are adversely affected resulting in reduced coordination, reduced ability to track moving objects, difficulty steering and reduced response to emergency driving situations

BAC of 0.08:

Muscle coordination is poor (e.g., balance, speech, vision, reaction time, and hearing), it is harder to detect danger and judgment, self-control, reasoning, and memory are impaired resulting in reduced concentration, short-term memory loss, loss of speed control, reduced information processing capability (e.g., signal detection, visual search) and impaired perception.

Other Vehicles- Not Just Automobiles: *A growing number of alcohol-related crashes occur on water and snow while motor boating, jet-skiing and/or snowmobiling.*

Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) is a Crime.

If you are convicted, you will face a substantial fine, a mandatory surcharge, license revocation, higher insurance premiums, and possible incarceration.

But, We Have Made Progress: *Due to increased public awareness, prevention, enforcement and treatment/recovery, alcohol-impaired driving deaths have decreased 48.5% from 1982 (26,172) to 2006 (13,470).*

Warning: Drinking and Driving is Not the Only Alcohol-Related Risk of Death: *Annually, almost 100,000 deaths are alcohol-related, and only 13.5% are drinking and driving. Over 86.5% of all alcohol-related deaths are pedestrian accidents, falls, fires, homicides, alcohol-overdose, suicides and health-related deaths, e.g., cirrhosis, etc.*

Now, as I said a few minutes ago, there is nothing good that can be said about consuming alcoholic beverages. It only brings trouble and plenty of it. As you may know, the Word of God clearly warns against drunkenness.

I do not have the time to show you all of the Scripture pertaining to the subject, but here is one clear instruction for all those who profess to be followers of Jesus

Christ. Ephesians 5:18 says to us, *“And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.”*

The most obvious way to avoid drunkenness is to abstain from the consumption of any kind of alcoholic beverage. Believers who deceive themselves with the idea that they can toy with alcohol will live to regret it. Remember, you are playing with fire! It only takes one incident of excess to utterly ruin your life or even end it!

In regard to the problem of underage drinking in the country the biggest obstacle in the way of training our youth to avoid this evil is the irresponsible behavior of adults who surround our kids. We constantly send our children the message that alcohol is to be consumed responsibly when you come of age.

However, the average adult who consumes alcohol does so irresponsibly. Remember, if you take more than one drink a day you are consuming alcohol irresponsibly!

And what can be said about “binge” drinking by so-called responsible adults? And what can be said about those times when so-called responsible adults actually become drunk?

I say without apology that adults who drink in front of their children are providing the wrong example, period! The only sure way to avoid the heartache caused by alcohol is to abstain from it entirely!

Let's finish today with a reading from Proverbs 23 which says, "*Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*"

In conclusion today, may I challenge you to help our youth avoid the evil of alcohol? Teach them by example to keep it out of their personal life and out of their social settings. Teach them by example to abstain from the consumption of any kind of alcoholic beverage, period.