

TO DRINK OR NOT TO DRINK: A SOBER LOOK AT THE QUESTION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Evangelicals were once the bulwark against the flood tide of alcohol consumption. It was the norm to be a total abstainer. Today the tide has turned. Surveys show that a staggering 64 percent of Protestant lay persons are no longer teetotalers.¹ The time has come to reexamine this trend both biblically and socially.

There are many good reasons not to drink alcoholic beverages or use other addictive drugs. Foremost, the Bible condemns strong drink as a beverage. By biblical standards, today's beer and wine are strong drinks. In Bible times beer and wine, which were consumed moderately, were diluted and did not cause intoxication in normal usage. Therefore, it follows that today's beer and wine are beverages condemned in Scripture as a beverage.

II. IT IS UNBIBLICAL TO USE INTOXICATION DRINKS

It is axiomatic that a Christian should not do what God condemns, and the Bible condemns the use of intoxicating drinks. The Hebrew word for strong drink is *shekar*. It is used 23 times in the OT and refers to intoxicating drink made from barley, pomegranates, dates, apples, or honey. The more common word is *yayin*. It is used 141 times, most of which means fermented grape juice. The Hebrew word *tirosh*, occasionally translated "new wine" means freshly pressed juice. It is used 38 times in the OT (e.g. Gen 27: 28; Joel 2:24; Mic 6:15). In the NT the Greek word *gleukos* (meaning "sweet wine") is used for new wine (Acts 2:13). The word *oinos* is more widely used for wine (cf. Eph 5:18). The following passages condemn the use of strong drink (*shekar*): "Wine is a mocker [*yayin*], intoxicating drink [*shekar*] arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Prov 20:1). "Do not look on wine [*yayin*] when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around

¹This is based on a July 2007 Gallup Poll of 18-year-old and above protestant laity.

smoothly. At last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper” (Prov 23:31–32). “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? . . . Those who linger over wine [*yayin*]” (Prov 23:29–30). “Give strong drink [*shekar*] to him who is dying . . .” (Prov 31:6). “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, That they may follow strong drink; Who continue until night till wine inflames them” (Isa 5:11). “Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it” (Isa 24:9). “Woe to men valiant for mixing strong drink” (Isa 5:22). “But they [the priests and prophets] have also erred through wine, And through strong drink are out of the way” (Isa 28:7; cf. 56:12). Only false prophets say: “I will prophesy to you of wine and strong drink” (Mic 2:11). “Do not drink wine (*yayin*) or intoxicating drink (*shekar*), you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting lest you die” (Lev 10:9). “When a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the Lord, he shall abstain from wine (*yayin*) and strong drink” (*shekar*) (Num 6:2–3 NASB). Samson the Nazirite was told: “Now drink no wine or strong drink . . .” (Judg 13:7). Kings were exhorted: “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes strong drink” (Prov 31:4). To all Israel (in the wilderness): “You have not drunk wine [*yayin*] or strong drink [*shekar*]; that you may know that I am the LORD your God” (Deut 29:6).²

In these texts total abstinence from strong drink was urged for all believers, including kings, priests, Nazarites, and Jews in general. Further, total abstinence from all alcohol was an ideal goal that was set forth for those who wished to attain an even higher ideal (such as those who took the vow of a Nazarite). And under conditions where good water was plentiful (as from the Rock in the wilderness), all the people were total abstainers from all alcohol (Deut 29:6). This suggests that God’s ideal standard was total abstinence from all alcohol drinks, strong and diluted, although the latter were permitted in moderation.

The NT exhortations about intoxicating drinks follow those in the OT. Paul wrote, “Now I have written unto you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard—not even to eat with such a person” (1 Cor 5:11). “Do you not know that . . . Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals . . . nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9–11). “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation [debauchery]” (Eph 5:18).

² Unless otherwise noted, the biblical citations in this article are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

Although drunkenness is a serious sin, it is not the only reason to abstain from alcohol. Indeed, there are some twenty reasons listed for abstaining from intoxicants in the Bible:

1. It slows the thinking process (Prov 31:4–5).
2. It makes one dizzy (Job 12:25).
3. It is associated with self-centeredness (Hab 2:5).
4. It causes sickness (Jer 25:27).
5. It causes forgetfulness (Prov 31:6–7).
6. It produces delirious dreams (Prov 23:33).
7. It results in sleepiness (Gen 9:20–25).
8. It produces complacency and laziness (Zeph 1:12).
9. It numbs one’s feelings (Prov 23:31–35).
10. It leads to poverty (Prov 21:17).
11. It leads to brokenness (Jer 23:9).
12. It results in sadness and depression (Isa 16:9–10).
13. It causes sorrow (Prov 23:29–30).
14. It produces blackouts (Gen 19:33–35).
15. It leads to immorality (Joel 3:3).
16. It encourages sexual perversion (Hab 2:15).
17. It results in guilt (Isa 24:20).
18. It causes injuries (Prov 23:35).
19. It can result in insanity (Jer 51:7).
20. It makes one vulnerable to his enemies (1 Sam 13:28).³

Both testaments allow for drinking non-intoxicating (mixed) alcoholic beverages in moderation. Leaders are not to be “given to wine,” (1 Tim 3:3), implying that moderation is acceptable. Indeed, fermented wine was used in Communion (1 Cor 11:21). And since the wine Jesus made had the taste of “good wine” to the wedding guests (John 2:10), it is reasonable to assume that it was the same as that to which they were accustomed which was fermented.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the Bible repeatedly warns against the use of intoxicating beverages (strong drinks) for the numerous reasons given above. What then was the difference between the “good wine” they were allowed to take in moderation and the “strong drink” they were

³It is granted that many of these are degrees of intoxication or its consequence, but even short of being fully intoxicated there are many reasons given here not to drink alcohol.

warned against.⁴ The answer is that the wine appropriate for moderate consumption was diluted with water. Studies of ancient customs reveal that biblical wine was fermented, but it was also diluted 3 to 1 when used as a beverage or in connection with the Passover or Communion. The Jewish Talmud asserts that Passover wine was three parts water to one part of wine.⁵ In the intertestamental period we read: "It is harmful to drink wine alone, or, again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious . . ." (2 Macc 15:39). The Jewish Mishnah said, "They do not say the Benediction over the wine until water has been added to it."⁶

Even pagans diluted alcoholic beverages with water. Homer speaks of 20 to 1 ratio. Pliny wrote of an 8 to 1 mixture.⁷ At a 3 to 1 ratio it would take over 20 glasses of NT wine to get drunk! As a matter of fact, it was basically a means to purify and sweeten water. When they had plentiful pure water, as in the Wilderness from the Rock, they took no wine, even in diluted form.

As Professor Robert Stein noted, "In ancient times wine was usually stored in large pointed jugs called *amphorae*. When wine was to be used it was poured from the *amphorae* into large bowls called *kraters*, where it was mixed with water. . . . From these *kraters*, cups or *kylix* were then filled."⁸ Thus, wine acceptable for consumption was not strong (undiluted) wine such as is consumed today. Drinking undiluted wine, such as that purchased over the counter, was considered barbarian by even pagans. Mnesitheus of Athens said, "Mix it half and half, and you get madness; unmixed, bodily collapse!" The early Church father Cyprian wrote, "Thus, therefore, in considering the cup of the Lord, water alone cannot be offered, even as wine alone cannot be offered."⁹ Clement of Alexandria added, "It is best for the wine to be mixed with as much water as possible . . ."¹⁰

Since good drinking water was not readily available for most people in the first century, purification was necessary. Mixing one part wine with three parts water served this purpose well, but also made for a more tasty

⁴ For a study of the nature of wine in the NT, see Wayne House, "Wine" in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988).

⁵ (*b. Pes.* 108a), cf. (*b. Shab.* 77a).

⁶ See *The Mishnah, Berakhot* 7.5 ed, by Herbert Danby (Oxford University Press, 1893).

⁷ See Robert H. Stein, "Wine Drinking in NT Times" *Christianity Today* June, 1975.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Cyprian, *Epistle of Cyprian in James Donaldson, ed., Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957 reprint), vol. 5, 62.2.11.

¹⁰ Clement of Alexander, *Instructor. in James Donaldson, ed., Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957 reprint), vol. 2, 2.2.

beverage as well and offered health benefits for those who drank it in moderation (Tim 5:23).

To sum up: 1) The Bible condemns strong (undiluted) alcoholic drinks as a beverage; 2) Today's beer and wine are strong drink by biblical standards since they have not been mixed with three parts water; 3) Today's beer and wine as beverages are condemned by the Bible; 4) We should not do what God condemns; 5) Therefore, the sober conclusion is that Christians should not drink beer and wine. More significant reasons for not imbibing will be considered now.

III. IT IS DEADLY TO TAKE INTOXICATING DRINK

In addition to the strong biblical arguments against drinking beer, wine, or other intoxicants is that drinking can be deadly. Consider some of the statistics to support the deadly nature of alcohol:¹¹

1. It causes more deaths than any other drug (about 200,000 per year).
2. It is responsible for 70 percent of drownings and chokings.
3. It is involved in 50 percent of all "freak accidents."
4. It causes some 27,000 deaths a year by liver disease.
5. 30 percent of all suicides are alcohol related.
6. 20 percent of all airplane crashes are alcohol related.
7. 50 percent of all murderers are drunk when they kill.
8. 50 percent of all fire deaths are alcohol related.
9. It causes about a third of all traffic deaths.

IV. IT IS DANGEROUS TO TAKE INTOXICATING DRINKS

Further, good sense informs us that we should not do what is dangerous to society. Since drinking alcohol is clearly dangerous to society, it follows that we should not imbibe. The following statistics clearly support this conclusion.

1. Alcohol contributes to more deaths than any other drug.
2. It leads to drug addiction (which is 5 percent of the population).
3. It is involved in both spouse and child abuse.

¹¹ Many of the statistics used in this article are from US government sources such as the Office of the National Drug Control Policy, the National Center for Health, the U.S. Department of Human Services, and especially the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

4. It contributes to mental and physical diseases.
5. 45 percent of the homeless are alcoholics.
6. It contributes to 500,000 injuries per year.

A little known fact is that during Prohibition (1920–1933) many social ills decreased in America. For example, cirrhosis dropped 66 percent; insanity decreased 60 percent; arrest for drunk and disorderly conduct decreased 50 percent.; spouse and child abuse dropped to an all-time low. In fact, addiction and consumption of alcohol decreased for 55 years (up to 1975). Both the positive and negative evidence supports abstinence.

Some support the myth that Prohibition caused an increase in crime, when in fact homicide increased at a higher rate before Prohibition and organized crime was already well established.¹² Further, like other drug problems and crimes (such as illegal immigration), the difficulty of enforcement does not mean we should make it legal.¹³

V. IT IS ADDICTIVE TO TAKE INTOXICATING DRINKS

Christians who believe that a little beer or wine will not hurt them often ignore their addictive nature. The logic is simple: we should avoid addictive drugs. Alcohol is an addictive drug; therefore, we should avoid drinking beer or wine.

Again, the facts support this conclusion. Consider the following:

1. 5 percent of the U.S. population has an addiction to alcohol.
2. Alcoholics outnumber all other addicts.
3. 77 percent of high schoolers use alcohol.
4. 29 percent of high schoolers drink heavily.
5. 44 percent of 8th graders drink.
6. 1 in 10 social drinkers will become addicts!

VI. IT IS UNHEALTHY TO TAKE INTOXICATING DRINKS

We all know that we should avoid partaking of what is harmful to our health. The extent of alcohol's effects on health can be gauged by the following statistics:

1. It is the number three health problem in the country.
2. It results in 1/2 million hospital admissions per year.

¹² See the US Government “Wickersham Commission Report” at www.druglibrary.org for statistics to back these conclusions.

¹³ See our book *Legislating Morality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988) chap. 2.

3. It impairs the function of vital organs.
4. It causes liver diseases.
5. It contributes to heart attacks.
6. It increases the chances of cancer 3–6 times.
7. It is the number three cause of birth defects.
8. It can cause insanity.
9. It can injure the nervous system.
10. It can cause impotence and sterility.

Those who consume alcohol embrace the dangerous philosophy of living only for today and not caring about tomorrow.

VII. IT IS UNNECESSARILY COSTLY TO TAKE INTOXICATING DRINKS

Alcohol abuse drains society of \$184 billion annually. It is estimated that alcohol consumption costs:

1. \$7 billion a year in special services.
2. \$19 billion a year in medical services.
3. \$37 billion loss of future earnings by earlier death.
4. \$86 billion in alcohol-related illness.
5. \$1 billion in treating fetal alcohol syndrome.
6. \$10 billion loss of earnings of crime victims.
7. \$24 billion for crashes, fires, and crimes.

Although the government collects \$18 billion annually in tax revenue from the sale of alcohol, it is insignificant in comparison to its drain on society.

VIII. IT IS NOT EDIFYING TO TAKE INTOXICATING DRINKS

According to Scripture, believers should avoid what is not edifying. Paul writes, “All things are lawful, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful, but all things do not edify (build up)” (1 Cor 10: 23). Paul additionally writes, “All things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the mastery of any” (1 Cor 6:12). Again he admonishes, “It is good neither to eat meat nor drink [diluted] wine, nor do anything by which your brother stumbles . . .” (Rom 14:21).

Not only is strong (undiluted) wine forbidden, but so is diluted alcohol, if it causes others to stumble. It is a known fact that some alcoholics have lapsed back into drunkenness after a few sips from a

Communion service. This in itself is good enough reason for Christians not to use real wine in Communion.

IX. ANSWERING SOME OBJECTIONS

Objections come from both sides on this issue. Some still attempt to show from Scripture that “new wine”¹⁴ was unfermented and, hence, had no alcohol content.¹⁵

This they say was used at Passover and Communion. However, neither the Scriptures nor the Jewish custom supports this view. For both OT (Hos 4:11) and NT wine, even “new wine” was fermented. This is clear from the reference on Pentecost that the disciples were “full of new wine” (Acts 2: 13). Likewise, those drunk at the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11: 21) clearly were not taking Welch’s grape juice. And the wine Jesus made from water (John 2) tasted like the wine they were used to (which was fermented). This would undoubtedly not have been true if it were totally flat (without any alcohol), as they had been accustomed to drinking. Further, the grape juice fermented very quickly in biblical times, leaving little time when it was non-alcoholic.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Greek word for new wine is *gleukos*, meaning “sweet wine.” The other word for wine in the NT is *oinos*. It too was fermented and could make one drunk (Eph 5: 18).

¹⁵ See William Patton, *Bible Wines or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of Ancient Times*, 1811, reprinted Oklahoma City: Sane Press, 1975). He argued that since all leaven was forbidden in the Passover (Lev 2: 3–14) and since fermentation was a form of leavening, it follows that Passover wine was not fermented (p. 83). However, this conclusion does not follow for many reasons. First, fermented wine is not mentioned in the list of forbidden leavened items. Leaven here refers only to foods, not drinks. Second, even “new wine” in the Bible was fermented (Hos 4: 11; Acts 2:13). Third, Jewish practice mentioned in 2 Macc 15: 39 indicates that fermented wine was mixed with water for the Passover. Fourth, some persons were drunk at Communion which service originated from at the Passover feast (1 Cor 11: 21; cf. Matt 26: 26).

¹⁶ Professor A. C. Schultz pointed out that “Usually the new wine was left in the vat to undergo the first fermentation which took four to seven days. It was then drawn off (Hag 2: 16, lit. baled out). . . . The whole period of fermentation [see Matt 9: 17] would last from two to four months when the wine would be ready for use (A. C. Schultz, “Wine and Strong Drink,” in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5:938).

On the other side there are objections from sipping saints who want to justify their unbiblical, unnecessary, and unhealthy social drinking habits. It is to these objections that we turn our attention.

Objection One: If God didn't want us to drink it, why did he make alcohol?

There are several other reasons God made alcohol. First, it is a sedative. Proverbs 31:6 declares: "Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish." Second, alcohol can be used as a stimulant to revive the faint (2 Sam 6: 2): "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and fruit are for the men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the desert." Third, it is an antiseptic. Luke says of the Good Samaritan that "He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10: 34). Finally, alcohol is a laxative. Thus, Paul affirmed (in 1 Tim 5: 23): "Stop drinking only water, and use a little [diluted] wine because of your stomach¹⁷ and your frequent illnesses."

Objection Two: The Bible condemns only drunkenness, not sipping strong drinks.

In response to this objection, one need only review the reasons given near the beginning of this article for the dangers of alcohol. They include the fact that it slows the thinking process (Prov 31: 4–5); it makes one dizzy (Job 12: 25); it causes sickness (Jer 25: 27); it causes forgetfulness (Prov 31: 6–7); it produces complacency and laziness (Zeph 1: 12); it leads to poverty (Prov 21: 17); it results in sadness and depression (Isa 16: 9–10), and it leads to sorrow (Prov 23: 29–30), immorality (Joel 3: 3), sexual perversion (Hab 2: 15), guilt (Isa 24: 20), injuries (Prov 23: 35), insanity (Jer 51: 7), and makes one vulnerable to his enemies (1 Sam 13: 28). So, complete drunkenness is not the only reason alcohol is wrong. It is also addictive and harmful in many other ways (physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially).

Objection Three: The Bible recommends strong drink as a beverage.

Deuteronomy 14:26 says, "And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine [*yayin*] or strong drink [*shekar*], for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice with your household." From

¹⁷ ¹⁶The Greek word *stomachos* translated "stomach" here is not limited to the bodily organ now given that name. Rather, it refers to the entire digestive system. See Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980) 592.

this text some attempt to justify the use of strong drink from the OT. In response, there are several important points to make.

First, if this verse recommends strong drink as a beverage, then the Bible contradicts itself since numerous verses given above say just the opposite. Second, isolated and unclear texts like this should not be used to contradict clear ones. Third, the wine was bought in strong (undiluted) form for ease in travel and storage, and for use as a medicine—not to drink as such. Fourth, as shown above, whatever drinking they did was in diluted form. Fifth, the reference here is not to regular use of it as a beverage but specifically for a Jewish festival in which the whole family (with children) could do and “rejoice.” Surely, the Bible is not recommending strong (intoxicating) drink for children!

Objection Four: It is legalistic to make extra-biblical laws about alcohol which the Bible does not make.

In response to the charge of legalism several things should be observed. First, it is not extra-biblical to say that God forbids strong drink, as a review of the verses at the beginning of this article shows. Second, it is not extra-biblical since the Bible condemns “strong drink,” and today’s alcoholic beverages are “strong drink.” Third, even if the Bible does not explicitly demand total abstinence, it would not be legalistic to set this forth as a wise rule for living. Most reasonable people do not want their pilot drinking before flying or their surgeons drinking before operating. More precisely, legalism is the false belief that keeping certain laws—whether biblical or not—can be used as a condition for meriting God’s grace, whether for justification or sanctification (see Gal 3: 3).¹⁸ But one can legislate wise laws about human behavior without being legalistic in the biblical sense of the concept. Otherwise, laws against drunk driving and illegal immigration—and a host of other things beneficial to society—would be legalistic and, thereby, wrong.

Objection Five: The Bible says it is okay to take a “little” wine (1 Tim 5:23).

¹⁸ Jesus condemned legalism when he said: “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man” (Matt 15: 11). This “comes from the heart” (v. 18). The Apostle Paul spoke to legalism when he refuted the view that: “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1; cf 15: 5, 24). But the heart of legalism is addressed in Galatians where Paul declared: “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law . . .?” (Gal 3: 2). Paul said: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” (v. 3) In short, legalism is the belief that one can gain God’s favor by keeping divine or human laws, whether for justification or for sanctification. In short, the belief that grace can be merited by good works (see Rom 4: 5; Eph 2: 8–9; Titus 3: 5–7).

While the Bible speaks approvingly about a “little” diluted wine [*yayin*], it does not advocate indulging in undiluted or “strong drink” [*shekar*] such as the wine and beer commonly consumed today. Even common sense informs us that it is not wise to take these strong addictive drugs. Even if it could be shown that total abstinence from strong or intoxicating drinks is not biblically demanded, nonetheless, it certainly is not wise. The Bible exhorts us to follow wisdom (cf. the book of Proverbs).

Objection Six: What about nicotine and gluttony? Are they not addictive and destructive also?

Yes, they are, and Christians should avoid the non-medicinal use of nicotine as well as over-eating. However, unlike food we do not need alcohol to live. Also, gluttony causes obesity and is harmful to one's health. As for nicotine, Christians should avoid it since it is addictive and has been demonstrated to be a causal factor in cancer. However, neither of these has caused the same disastrous personal, physical, psychological, and social effects as alcohol.

Since alcohol, nicotine and gluttony have adverse effects upon society to varying degrees, we have laws governing smoking and drinking, and we disclose the nutritional value on labels.

Objection Seven: What about studies which show that regular use of alcohol helps prevent heart disease and increases good cholesterol?

First, there are other non-addictive ways to obtain the similar results such as diet, exercise, and non-addictive medicine. Second, the favorable results may be due to antioxidants present, not the alcohol. Third, other studies show that grape juice has similar results. Fourth, some proponents of using alcohol to help prevent heart attacks admit there may be other genetic and environmental factors at play in the favorable statistics. Fifth, the American Heart Association, which is the most respected authority on the topic, does not recommend it as a treatment. Sixth, the end does not justify the means. Just because something can help cure a condition does not mean it is good to use it. For example, embryonic stem cells may be helpful in curing diseases, but it does not justify killing the babies who died to provide these stem cells. Finally, it is a fact that non-drinkers live longer. Fifty-five percent of non-drinkers live till 75+ while only forty percent of drinkers live to the same age.

Objection Eight: Alcohol makes one relax and feel better.

Unfortunately, in our feel-good and self-centered culture this objection carries a lot more weight than it deserves. In response, we note

that one should not depend on addictive drugs for happiness. If one wants a high without a hangover, Paul's advice is hard to beat: "Do not be drunk with wine in which is excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph 5: 18).

God's plan for our nerves is a lot better than the booze promoters: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4: 6–7).

Conclusion

To drink or not to drink? We have taken a sober look at the question. What is the answer? Just say No! Why? Because drinking alcoholic beverages is unbiblical, deadly, addictive, unhealthy, costly, a bad example, not edifying, and unnecessary. Clearly, total abstinence is the safest policy.

Why then is our society in general—and evangelical Christianity in particular—on such a self-destructive alcoholic course. Hosea gave part of the answer: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4: 6). The rest of the answer lies in resisting temptation. The Bible declares that no temptation (including drugs) is too strong to resist: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10: 13). Mark Twain once said of the temptation to gamble that the best toss of the dice is to toss them away. Likewise, the best use of the beer can is to toss it into the reprocessing bin—after the contents have been poured down the drain!