

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Does Drinking Alcohol Make Us More Relatable to the World?

by: Ryan Hasty

In discussing the topic of social drinking with other bible students, I have oft heard the argument used that sharing an alcoholic drink with a non-Christian could perhaps build a bridge to teach them the gospel. Therefore, some advocate engaging in social drinking merely because they believe it will draw more people from the world into the church. Is it true that social drinking will make us more relatable to the world?

The answer is undeniably “yes” – social drinking will unarguably make us more relatable to the world. It will cause people of the world who view Christianity as a cramp on their lifestyle to reconsider. In fact, there are a broad array of subjects that would achieve the same results – the recreational consumption of Marijuana, cursing and swearing, refraining from taking the bible so literally, the loosening of God’s marriage law, etc. All of these subjects and more will unequivocally make us more relatable

to the world. But is that what Christ is calling us to be? Should we become more conformed to the world, or should we be influencing the world to become more conformed to Christ? Rom 12:2 – “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

In Gal 6:14b, Paul said, “...the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” In other words, the world was despised by Paul as much as he was despised by the world for the sake of the cross, having become “the scum of the world, the dregs of all things” (1 Cor 4:13). Paul certainly could have gained more of a hearing if only he were willing to meet the world halfway regarding its ideals. Instead, he preached “Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23), a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others. It was unavoidable. Some wanted it

and most did not because to fully follow Christ, we must likewise take up our cross daily and follow him (Luke 9:23). This requires self-denial and a life of sacrifice. It means there are some things we have to be willing to give up for the one who gave up so much more for us. Not everyone is willing to do this. Many desire a “Christianity” that does not require significant lifestyle changes.

It is lawful and wise to “be all things to all men” so that we might “save some” (1 Cor 9:22). But we must be cautious not to put the cart before the horse by assuming that this alone justifies the consumption of modern day alcoholic beverages. In Luke 10:29, the lawyer asked Jesus. “Who is my neighbor?” simply because his desire was self-justification. Many are looking for this same justification in areas in which God has not granted liberty and in fact has specifically warned against. We must be careful in trying to justify fleshly desires so that we do not become enablers of those whom we seek to influence. Though the ancient world diluted their wine, we dare not be guilty of watering down the gospel strictly for the sake our passions.

Alcohol & Christian Sobriety

by: Ryan Hasty

In considering whether it is wise for Christians to engage in the temperate consumption of modern day alcoholic beverages, we must consider the bible’s teaching in regards to sobriety. Sober-mindedness, sobriety, and alertness carries with it the basic idea of being under the control of, regulated by, or ruled by the mind, intellect, and reason. It also means not being under the influence of an intoxicant that can rob a person of good sense, balance, judgment, and reason. This is a concept that is stressed throughout the entirety of the New Testament:

1 Cor 15:34 – “Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning.”

Eph 6:18 – “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

1 Thes 5:6 – “So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.”

1 Pet 1:13a – “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober.”

1 Pet 4:7 – “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”

1 Pet 5:8 – “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

One of the primary reasons that Christians should eliminate any and all substances from our lives that rob us of our judgment and reason is because of who we are at war with. Our war is against an enemy of incredible intelligence and immense fury and hatred towards us. As 1 Pet 5:8 says, Satan roams around looking for those whom he can devour. He is incredibly opportunistic (Luke 4:13), carefully evaluating the weaknesses of Christians which he can exploit. What better time to tempt Christians then when we are imbibing a beverage that begins hindering our judgment and decision making the very moment we ingest it? If I am serious about standing “firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11), why would I engage in the consumption of a beverage that robs me of that ability? Is that wise? 2 Tim 2:4 – “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

Some believe they ought to be able to engage in the consumption of alcohol in the privacy of their home while they are away from the influence of the world. I will argue that there is no better time to be on guard against the devil than in this very moment. It is in the privacy of our home where no one is watching that we can be most tempted - by the television shows we watch, the web sites that we browse, how we treat our spouse and our children, etc. It is when we are behind closed doors that we must have our wits about us the most, not engaging in a beverage that robs us of our judgment. The privacy of our home is a vulnerable atmosphere in which Satan loves to exploit.

Alcohol is such a deceptive drug. This is why many people arrested for DUI did not realize they were over the limit. It is why the person sitting at the bar is talking so loudly without realizing they are doing so. No person who is under the influence of a judgment impairing substance like alcohol is the best judge of his own sober-mindedness. The path between “moderation” and “drunkenness” is just too slippery. We have a hard enough time fighting off the schemes of the devil when we are not drinking. Let us resolve not to make it any easier on the devil to deceive us by abstaining from the recreational and social pursuits of alcohol.

Why I Left the Baptist Church

by: Larry Rouse

In the fall of 1973 I had no intention of leaving the church in which I was raised. On the contrary, I had recently publicly professed my faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized on the same day. I could well be described as “on fire” for the Lord. I was quickly received and surrounded by men and women who wanted with all their hearts to reach others with the gospel. Both in social settings and in door-to-door efforts I was taught and shown by example how to share my faith.

I began studying the Bible on my own for the first time in my life. I was greatly encouraged in this by others in the Baptist church who also expressed great confidence in the Bible as the perfect, complete word of God. They encouraged me to memorize scripture, to quote scripture, and, above all, to follow the scripture, even above what a man or a church might want. I truly had learned the nature of a living faith as expressed by Jesus when He said: “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

There were issues that I began considering as I looked at the current state of what was broadly called “Christianity.” Jesus clearly pointed to a definite, clear path for all of those who trust in Him to follow (Mt 7:13-14). Our Lord, in the very night He was to be betrayed, prayed to the Father about each of us that would later come to believe in Him. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me (John 17:20-21). When I read the Lord’s words, uttered in the very shadow of the cross, I became determined that I would not be the one that would cause another to turn away from the Lord. These words plainly show that unity can come only from a complete commitment to the Lord.

Anyone who looks at the religious world can easily see that most of the effort of men in the name of God is done to be seen by men and out of loyalty to men and the denominations they build (Gal 1:10, Mt 15:13-14). While my knowledge of the Bible was limited, I decided to test my own practices and be open to new things by focusing on God’s word and not on men. “The Lord will not lead me wrong” was often in my thoughts as I looked at the scriptures. I was not afraid to be challenged by His word!

One Sunday morning, as I was driving from the Baptist College, Samford University, to my parent's house, I heard a lesson from a preacher concerning the Lord's Supper. While I was in the Baptist church, I had never partaken of this memorial of the Lord. The lesson on the radio described passages that I had read, concerning how Jesus instituted His supper and how He wanted every disciple to partake of it (Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-25). As the preacher continued, he showed the significance of Sunday, the first day of the week, in the regular assemblies of Christians (1 Cor 16:2). The Holy Spirit recorded how one church partook of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16). As I drove my car, I also wrote down these and other passages of scripture to examine later. I became convinced that I should partake of the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week.

That very day I faced a dilemma. The Baptist church where I attended was not offering the Lord's Supper that Sunday. How was I going to resolve this situation? Rather than point to inconsistencies of others, or make up some hypothetical situation to justify myself or "my church," I simply tried to obey the Lord. That day I viewed the lunch I ate at my parent's house as a private partaking of this supper of the Lord. I was soon to see that this sincere effort was not the way to follow these instructions of Jesus. It would not be long, however, before I would find a proper way to remember Jesus as He had instructed.

After attending a semester at Samford University, I had enrolled at the University of Alabama and was in the process of visiting several churches. On a Wednesday night I decided to visit the University church of Christ. I sat in the back of the auditorium and heard a class taught by their campus minister, Ron Gholston. This class would plant a seed that would change my life.

Brother Gholston began with the great commission of Jesus as recorded in the book of Mark. "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). The teacher likened this verse to a math equation ($1+1=2$). He proceeded to make this point. “Suppose someone decided to be baptized but did not have a personal faith in Jesus. Would he be saved? It is like taking one of the “1’s” away from the equation. When that happens then you cannot have the proper result. A person who does not believe but is baptized cannot rightly expect salvation.”

I fully agreed with brother Gholston, but was surprised at the next point he made. “What about the person that believes but is not baptized?” He gave the same illustration with the equation ($1+1=2$) but then made a point that I had not considered. Was baptism an essential step in salvation?

Over the course of that class I came to see passages of scripture that I had never considered. The preacher made a similar point with the equation illustration ($1+1=2$) on another passage of scripture. “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). He began to make the point that whenever you find baptism and salvation (or forgiveness) in the same context, that baptism always precedes salvation (1 Pt 3:20-21). This point made a deep impression on me.

As a Baptist, I used the “4 Spiritual Laws” tract. In this tract I taught others to seek the forgiveness found in the blood of Jesus shed on the cross (Rom 3:23; 6:23). I urged them to receive Jesus as their Savior by saying the “sinner’s prayer,” being a fruit of genuine faith and repentance. This is what I had been taught and this was what I had seen practiced in the Baptist assemblies.

Brother Gholston continued in his class to give the example of the conversion of Paul. After the Lord had struck Paul blind, we find that Paul now came to believe in Jesus and obediently follow His instructions (Acts 9:1-6). I heard many sermons in the Baptist church describing how Paul was saved at that point. I could read in my Bible how Paul in Damascus was fervently praying and fasting before the Lord (Acts 9:7-11). I had considered Paul’s prayer as positive proof that he was now saved.

There was one more scripture to be presented in the class that would deeply move me and cause me to reconsider earlier teachings I had received as a Baptist. When Paul, in his own words, describes what Ananias said to him, it became crystal clear to me about the point in time that Paul was saved. “And now why are you waiting?

Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Paul had prayed and fasted for three days and still was not forgiven! He needed to be baptized!

The next week I spent a considerable amount of time in Bible Study and reflection. I privately talked to brother Gholston and came to see that there were some real questions about my own baptism. From the Bible I learned that it is possible to be immersed in water for the wrong reason and, as a result, that baptism not be acceptable to God (Acts 19:1-6). Rather than be unsure about my stand, I was baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of my sins (Acts 2:38).

This was just the beginning of my journey with the Lord. I knew that I needed to stand for the undenominational Christianity that the Lord had prayed for (John 17:20). From that point on, I have sought to be a part of local churches that would stand with the Lord in keeping the great commission He gave (Mark 16:15-16; Mt 28:18-20).

Since that time I have continued the same process of examination and standing. I since have often thought about Paul and the reasons he left the religion in which he was raised (Phil 3:4-11). Are you standing in God’s righteousness alone?

Some Quotes Worth Pondering . . .

“Religion is no different from other things in this sense: the less you invest in it, the poorer the quality.”

“He who permits himself to tell a lie once, finds it much easier to do it a second and third time, till at length it becomes habitual: he tells lies without attending to it, and truths without the world believing him.” -Thomas Jefferson

“Every time history repeats itself, the price of the lesson goes up.”

“Worry always gives a big shadow to a little thing.”

Daily Bible Reading

January 2020

January 1	Hebrews 1	January 17	Hebrews 9:11-22
January 2	Hebrews 2:1-9	January 20	Hebrews 9:23-10:10
January 3	Hebrews 2:10-3:6	January 21	Hebrews 10:11-25
January 6	Hebrews 3:7-19	January 22	Hebrews 10:26-39
January 7	Hebrews 4	January 23	Hebrews 11:1-12
January 8	Hebrews 5	January 24	Hebrews 11:13-22
January 9	Hebrews 6:1-8	January 27	Hebrews 11:23-40
January 10	Hebrews 6:9-20	January 28	Hebrews 12:1-11
January 13	Hebrews 7:1-10	January 29	Hebrews 12:12-24
January 14	Hebrews 7:11-28	January 30	Hebrews 12:25-13:6
January 15	Hebrews 8	January 31	Hebrews 13:7-25
January 16	Hebrews 9:1-10		

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