

# Back to Bible Basics

## Issue 6

### SMOKING

Ian McPherson

Some time ago on the Johnny Carson Show, a deep sea diver being interviewed said that sometimes they had to kill sharks, and that the poison they used killed them in about 8 seconds. When Carson asked him what sort of poison it was his answer was beeped out. It was tobacco. When we smoke, we breathe in carbon monoxide which prevents red blood corpuscles from picking up enough oxygen to feed body tissues. The carbon monoxide reaches 640 times the level considered safe in industrial places. The continual jolt from Nicotine causes the heart to beat perhaps 20 extra beats per minute. These examples are just a couple of the many evidences of the harmful affects of smoking. In spite of this, many people continue to smoke.

Some justify the habit by saying "**smoking calms my nerves**". What they do not realize is that the nicotine they inhale is the actual cause of the agitation. Others (the majority) admit the problem but say , "**I know it is damaging to my body but I can't stop.**" Thus, they live their life with a sense of failure, guilt, and inner conflict. Here are some hints as to how to give up smoking.

**ADMIT THAT IT IS WRONG.** I used to be a smoker, so I realize that it is very difficult to stop. It was not until I convinced myself that it was wrong that I had the strength to overcome the addiction. There are many reasons other than its health hazard that make smoking wrong for the Christian. It is bad stewardship (1 Corinthians 4:2), it is damaging to others comfort and welfare (James 2:8; Philippians 2:3), and dims the Christian light (Matthew 5:16).

**DRAW STRENGTH FROM GOD.** God promises that *"there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* --- 1 Corinthians 10:13. To say that the addiction is too strong to conquer is to deny God's ability to do what He says here. Remember "... **greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world**" (1 John 4:4). Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was that *"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"* (Ephesians 3:17). If we have Christ dwelling in the inner man, Paul assures us that we are "... *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think ...*" (Ephesians 3:20).

**APPLY THE WORD.** Be like the Thessalonians who allowed the word to work effectually in their lives. *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."* (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

**DETERMINE TO STOP.** Be like Paul who was determined not be controlled by any thing that would draw him away from Christ. *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* (1 Corinthians 6:12).

**SEEK HELP AND PRAYERS FROM YOUR BRETHREN.** *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much".* (James 5:16). Many smokers try and handle their addiction alone, but they should realize that there are brethren who want to pray with them and help them to overcome their addiction.

Fellowship time with Christians is vital to the building up of the inner man. Instead of leaving the church services as soon as the sermon is finished, stay behind and draw strength from fellowship with God's people. *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:"* (Hebrews 10:24).

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**DON'T PUT YOURSELF IN TEMPTATION'S WAY.** If you are serious about giving up smoking you should remove all your smokes from the house. The Lord said to pray *"Lead us not into temptation"*. Another way to avoid temptation is to keep away from other smokers. Smokers are inclined to congregate together and offer smokes to one another.

All of us who have been smokers realize that the smoking habit is difficult to stop. But with God's help it can and must be done. Let us continually say with Paul *"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"*. (Philippians 4:13). With God's help you can say **"No!"** to nicotine. 📖

## THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL

Brett Rutherford

Many Christians sincerely believe that it is acceptable for them to occasionally drink small amounts of alcohol. This misconception primarily arises from confusion caused by modern translations, and from ignorance on the Scriptural teachings on this issue.

*"Oinos"* is the Greek word in the New Testament, and Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), that is most often been translated as *"wine"*. Unfortunately, when people see the word *"wine"* in scripture they wrongly assume that alcohol is under consideration. In truth, the word *"oinos"* is a generic reference to any liquid product of the grape. In other words, *"oinos"* can refer to an alcoholic beverage, non-alcoholic grape juice, or vinegar.

Therefore, if one wants to know which grape beverage is being referred to in a verse he must consider the context. For example, when Jesus turned the water into *"wine"* at the wedding feast in Cana, it is clear from the context that the wine at the feast was simply grape juice (John 2:1-10). How did the author come to this conclusion? In verse ten the master of the house states that the wedding guests had already had a great deal to drink before the miraculously produced wine was presented to them. Can one honestly suggest that our Lord was responsible for providing more alcohol to those who had already consumed a great deal of alcohol? If alcoholic wine was the beverage served at this wedding, and if our Lord gave them more alcoholic wine, then these people would have been blind drunk. Our Lord would have been guilty of the sin of contributing to His neighbour's drunkenness (Habakkuk 2:15). Obviously, the context demands

that one comes to the conclusion that the wedding guests at Cana had been drinking non-alcoholic grape juice, and Jesus provided them with more of the same.

Furthermore, when one takes under consideration the entirety of Scripture on this subject, it is clear that God forbids the drinking of alcohol in any amount. Proverbs 20:1 states that, *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."* In Proverbs 23:29-31 the inspired writer points out those who have *"woe," "sorrow," "contentions," "complaints,"* and *"wounds without cause"* are those who drink alcohol. In Ephesians 5:19 the apostle Paul uses an inceptive form of the verb *"to drink"* when he commands that we are not to be *"drunk with wine."* An inceptive form of a verb requires one not to take the first step toward engaging in the action in question. In other words, the use of the inceptive form of the verb *"to drink"* means that Paul did not want Christians to even take that first sip of alcohol. Other verses condemning the drinking of alcohol are Proverbs 31:4, 5; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Isaiah 28:7; I Timothy 3:3,8; Isaiah 22:13; Habakkuk 2:5; Romans 13:13; 14:21; Luke 21:34; I Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21 etc. These verses show that drinking alcohol is a shameful practice.

In the case of Paul's recommendation to Timothy to *"take a little wine for his stomach's sake"* it is clear from the rest of Scripture that Paul is recommending grape juice - not alcohol. Timothy, like many other first century Christians, was in the habit of only drinking water. This habit was done in order to avoid being mistaken as a *"wine bibber"* or *"glutton."* Those who drank too much grape juice were considered gluttonous. Drinking grape juice was an expensive and fattening habit. Those who drank too much were guilty of excess. This is why deacons were commanded not to be *"given to much wine"* in I Timothy 3:8. Considering the bulk of Scripture on this issue I believe gluttony is under consideration in this passage - not drunkenness.

Keep in mind that Christians are to be sober-minded (I Timothy 3:2; Romans 12:3; Titus 1:8; 2:2). *"Soberness"* is defined as *"sensible, clear headed, and reasonable."* How can anyone claim he is expressing this characteristic if he is under the influence of even the smallest amount of a mind altering drug like alcohol?

