

## **Here's Why I Don't Drink Beverage Alcohol\*** **By Kevin Moore**

I'll just go ahead and admit from the start my extreme personal bias against alcohol consumption. And it has little to do with what the Bible directly says on the subject. Don't get me wrong ... I believe a strong biblical case can be made against social drinking,<sup>1</sup> and I have found eager attempts to justify the practice to be rather shallow and misleading.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, my strong disdain is largely based on personal experience. I am all too familiar with how alcohol has negatively affected me and members of my family, and I have seen its devastating effects on the lives and families of so many others. The bottom line is, I have yet to find anything good that comes from beverage alcohol, while I am painfully aware of a whole lot of evil associated with it.

Here are a few reasons I choose to completely abstain from alcoholic beverages.

**1. If I refuse to take even a single drink, my actions will never influence my spouse or my children to drink.** I take very seriously my God-given family responsibilities, including my position of leadership in the home and my role as a husband and father. As I seek to provide for my family, inclusive of their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (1 Timothy 5:8), being a good example is of far greater value than providing incentive or opportunity to consume intoxicants.

**2. If I refuse to take a single drink, my actions will never influence anyone else to drink.** Even if I believed I could occasionally drink alcohol with no ill effects, I can never say with assurance that no one else will be adversely affected. This is especially true with respect to my brothers and sisters in Christ who are recovering alcoholics (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11). It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a giant millstone tied around my neck than to lead an innocent soul into sin (Mark 9:42; cf. Prov. 20:1).

**3. If I refuse to take a single drink, I will never get drunk.** Most Bible-believers concede that drunkenness is sinful, but what constitutes drunkenness? Is *methuskō* (Eph. 5:18) an inceptive verb, marking the initial stages of the process, or is drunkenness to be equated only with full-blown inebriation? Who decides? Science uses blood alcohol content (the percentage of alcohol in the blood) as a measurement of intoxication for legal and medical purposes. While variables such as gender, weight, and food consumption determine the extent of alcohol's effects, here are the scientific standards.

To be considered legally drunk in the USA (as well as countries like Malta, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, and Singapore), the limit for those over 21 years of age is 0.08. However, in Costa Rica it is 0.075, while 0.07 is the limit in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Honduras. For Sri Lankans the threshold is 0.06, and in countries like Austria, Belgium, Denmark and France it is 0.05. Togo sets the limit at 0.042, and in Columbia it is 0.04. The benchmark in Jamaica is 0.035, and in India, Japan, and Uruguay it is 0.03. In Belarus blood alcohol concentration is not to exceed 0.029, while the maximum in China, Mongolia, Norway and Poland is 0.02. In Algeria, Albania, and Guyana the legal limit is as low as 0.01.

Is it reasonable to conclude that a person is drunk in Albania and Guyana but not drunk when the same amount of liquor is consumed in New Zealand or the United States? How many social drinkers are in the habit of testing their blood alcohol concentration to see whether or not they have reached the legal limit, and if God has set his own legal limit, how would that be determined?

It takes about 30 minutes to feel the effects of alcohol, which include (as per blood alcohol levels) slight mood changes (0.02), lowered inhibitions and impaired judgment (0.06),

deterioration of reaction time and control (0.08), impaired balance and coordination (0.15), decreased sensation and erratic emotions (0.20), diminished reflexes and semi-consciousness (0.30), loss of consciousness (0.40), and death (0.50). Yet “the absence of symptoms does not guarantee safe or low blood alcohol levels. With regular drinking a person develops a tolerance to alcohol that will reduce the outward appearance of high blood alcohol levels.”

**4. If I refuse to take a single drink, I will never become an alcoholic.** The type of alcohol one drinks is not a factor in determining if there is a problem.<sup>8</sup> While there are those who seem to have a physiological predisposition for alcoholism, anyone has about a 12% chance of becoming an alcoholic.<sup>9</sup> It doesn't matter whether my chances are any greater or not if I am committed to total abstinence. I can easily live without it. For anyone to say otherwise is to acknowledge there is a problem.

**5. If I refuse to take a single drink, I will never alienate myself from so many good people who are troubled by it.** On multiple occasions I have been offered a drink, and by respectfully declining I have never offended anyone. But the thought of a professing Christian knowingly indulging in intoxicants is disturbing to so many. Ethyl alcohol is a habit-forming drug that routinely divides families, friendships, and churches. If I am to genuinely look out “for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4) and if love “does not seek its own” (1 Cor. 13:5), how can I conscientiously insist on engaging in such divisive and destructive behavior?

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12).

\*Kevin's article was published with footnotes citing his sources. To see that article, or several other good articles on a variety of topics, visit his blog: <http://kmooreperspective.blogspot.com>