

ALCOHOL AND THE BIBLE

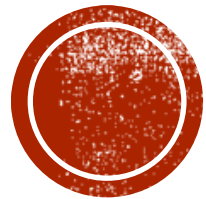


INTRODUCTION

- Were wine and other drinks less alcoholic in Bible times?
- **Yes, but...**
 - “Wine” was NOT non-alcoholic grape juice
 - It was likely slightly less alcoholic than today’s wine, and also often further diluted with water
 - Fermentation begins within hours of making grape juice
 - The ancients simply did not have any interest in stopping fermentation – it was difficult and costly for no perceived benefit
 - Nor was “Strong drink” like today’s hard liquor
 - Distillation is a very modern invention
 - There was no way back then to get alcohol as strong as today’s whiskey or vodka

INTRODUCTION

- There are many different words for wine or “strong drink” in Hebrew and Greek
 - They do (can) imply degrees of alcohol content
 - But none of them mean “this is not alcoholic”
 - Wine is what you think – from grapes
 - Strong drink is from fruit or barley
 - It is thought that the common Bible pairing of “wine or strong drink” is meant to convey “any kind of alcohol, no matter how potent”
 - **Proverbs 31:4**, “It is not for kings to drink wine, Or for rulers to desire strong drink”



DANGERS OF ALCOHOL

DANGERS

■ Health

- In 2020-2021, Excessive alcohol use “Caused about 178,000 deaths each year

- CDC; <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/facts-stats/index.html>; retrieved Jan 22, 2026

■ Driving

- 12,429 killed in alcohol-related vehicle accidents in 2023 in USA
 - About one every 45 minutes (on average)

■ Lives of others

- “62% of people who died in crashes involving alcohol-impaired drivers in 2020 were the alcohol-impaired drivers themselves; 38% were passengers of the alcohol-impaired drivers, drivers or passengers of another vehicle, or nonoccupants (such as a pedestrian)”

- CDC; <https://www.cdc.gov/impaired-driving/facts/index.html>; retrieved Jan 22, 2026

ANY AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL WILL IMPAIR YOU



BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT (BAC)
Table for Male (M) / Female (F)

Number of Drinks		Body Weight in Pounds								Driving Condition
		100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	
0	M	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	Only Safe Driving Limit
	F	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
1	M	.06	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03	.03	.02	Driving Skills Impaired
	F	.07	.06	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03	.03	
2	M	.12	.10	.09	.07	.07	.06	.05	.05	
	F	.13	.11	.09	.08	.07	.07	.06	.06	
3	M	.18	.15	.13	.11	.10	.09	.08	.07	
	F	.20	.17	.14	.12	.11	.10	.09	.08	
4	M	.24	.20	.17	.15	.13	.12	.11	.10	Legally Intoxicated
	F	.26	.22	.19	.17	.15	.13	.12	.11	
5	M	.30	.25	.21	.19	.17	.15	.14	.12	
	F	.33	.28	.24	.21	.18	.17	.15	.14	

Subtract .01% for each 40 minutes that lapse between drinks.

1 drink = 1.5 oz. 80 proof liquor, 12 oz. 5% beer, or 5 oz. 12% wine.

Fewer than 5 persons out of 100 will exceed these values.

<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/handbook/california-driver-handbook/alcohol-and-drugs/>

STORIES IN SCRIPTURE

- Noah (**Genesis 9:20-25**)
 - *Something* happened
- Lot (**Genesis 19:30-38**)
 - Two daughters
- Nadab & Abihu (**Leviticus 10:1-11**)
 - Implies alcohol was part of their decision-making

SCRIPTURE'S VIEW OF DRUNKENNESS

- **Proverbs 20:1**

- “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”

- **Romans 13:13**

- “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness”

- **1 Corinthians 6:10**

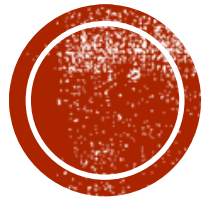
- “nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom

- **Ephesians 5:18**

- “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit of God.”

WARNINGS FROM PROVERBS

- **23:20-21**, “Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine...”
- **23:29-35**, “Do not look on the wine when it is red,
When it sparkles in the cup...
Your eyes will see strange things
And your mind will utter perverse things.”



WINE IS A BLESSING FROM GOD

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■ **Psalm 104:14-15**

- This entire psalm is about God's blessings
 - Verses 14-15 are about agriculture
 - Oil, bread, *and wine* are blessings from God, by the hand of man
 - The wine is not grape juice, if it “gladdens” a man
-
- What do we make of this passage?

14 You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth
15 and **wine to gladden the heart of man,**
oil to make his face shine
and bread to strengthen man's heart. (ESV)

PSALM 104

OUTLINE

- No hidden message here
- God does good
- And we can harness that
- God is great **vs. 1-2**
- God controls the big things (air and water)
 - God controls the air **vs. 3-5**
 - God controlled the flood **vs. 6-9**
 - God directs the rivers **vs. 10-13**
- God's land blessings bless others
 - People are blessed by agriculture **vs. 14-15**
 - Birds are blessed by the trees **vs. 16-17**
 - Animals are blessed by the rocks **v. 18**
- God controls the big things (time and space)
 - God controls time (Biological rhythms) **vs. 19-23**
 - God controls life (creation and abundance) **vs. 24-30**
 - God controls tectonic activity (!!!) **vs. 31-32**
- I will praise the LORD **vs. 33-35**

WINE IS A BLESSING FROM GOD

■ **Proverbs 31:4-7**

- Again, *definitely not grape juice*

- The uses of these are not ambiguous – they are meant to make pain and sadness go away
- But to be clear, the advice is not for all people – kings are told to abstain in vs. 4-5

6 Give strong drink to him who is perishing,
And wine to him whose life is bitter.

7 Let him drink and forget his poverty
And remember his trouble no more.

MEDICINAL USES OF ALCOHOL

■ **1 Timothy 5:23**

- “...use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”
- Very plainly says wine is medicinal

■ Quite possibly the point of **Proverbs 31:6-7**

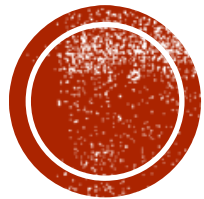
- “Give strong drink to him who is perishing”

■ Yes, there are antioxidants in wine

- And apples, and dark chocolate and many other things – you do not *need* wine

■ Cough medicine dose is only 1 oz (30 mL)

- Concentration about same as wine (10%)
- You do not need much.



THE LORD'S SUPPER AND WINE

THE LORD'S SUPPER

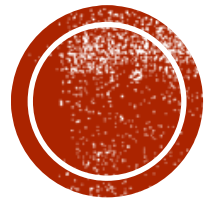
- EVERY SINGLE DESCRIPTION of the Lord's Supper avoids the word “wine”
 - Gospels say “*fruit of the vine*”
 - 1 Corinthians 11 says “*drink the cup*”
 - Was it *likely* to have been wine?
 - Yes, of course!
 - But **how very odd** that the *word* “wine” was not used
 - The opposite is also true – “Fruit of the vine” is not used in any other circumstance

THE LORD'S SUPPER

- Fruit of the vine
 - Authorizes us to use grape juice
 - We KNOW that the bread was unleavened (it was a *command*), so we follow that
 - But wine (nor grape juice) was not commanded for the Passover, so we do not need to deduce what was used; we only go by what is stated, and that's a beverage made of grapes.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

- On the other hand
 - I cannot suggest we *demand* all churches to use grape juice for the Lord's Supper
 - “Fruit of the vine” sure allows for wine, too
 - Early churches likely used wine out of necessity
 - It's implied in **1 Corinthians 11:21**; if wine was the problem, why didn't Paul condemn it?
 - Remote regions today may still not have reasonable access to grape juice
 - Should you ask when you visit another church?




CULTURE TODAY













Alcohol and the Bible

Scripture quotations from NASB, unless otherwise specified

IT'S EVERYWHERE

- This is a **randomly-**generated list of 2000's country songs

 **Daily Mix 1**

#	Title
17	 When You Say Nothing At All Alison Krauss & Union Station
	 Whiskey Lullaby (feat. Alison Krauss) Brad Paisley, Alison Krauss
19	 Bye-Bye Jo Dee Messina
20	 Drinkin' Problem Midland
21	 Beer For My Horses Toby Keith, Willie Nelson
22	 I Hope You Dance Lee Ann Womack
23	 Brand New Man Brooks & Dunn
24	 Somebody Like You Keith Urban
25	 Piece of My Heart Faith Hill
26	 Colder Weather Zac Brown Band
27	 Two Dozen Roses Shenandoah
28	 I Love This Bar Toby Keith

IT IS VERY POPULAR FOR SONGS TO BLEND ALCOHOL AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

- Red Dirt Road (Brooks & Dunn)
 - “It's where I drank my *first* beer / It's where I found Jesus”
- She's everything (Brad Paisley)
 - “She's a Saturday out on the town / And a church girl on Sunday
... glass of wine ...feeling kinda tipsy”
- Boondocks (Little Big Town)
 - “Five card poker on Saturday night / Church on Sunday morning”
- This is not medicinal alcohol nor moderation
- But it is love of drunkenness unashamedly paired with supposed Christianity



THE BIBLE CALLS US TO BE SOBER

- **1 Corinthians 15:32-34**

- “If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE. Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ **Become sober-minded** as you ought, and stop sinning...”

- **1 Thessalonians 5:4-8**

- “those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of *the* day, **let us be sober**, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

- **1 Peter 5:8**

- “**Be sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil...”
(KJV)

- **2 Timothy 4:5**

- “But you, **be sober in all things**, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”

SOBERNESS IS ALERT AND READY

- Not “taking the edge off”
- Watching for the devil takes all our wits
 - He is not unable to exploit our weakness if we are intoxicated
- Do not think “*What is permissible?*”
 - Think “How can I serve God the best I can?”
 - **1 Corinthians 6:12**
- We need men who are “above reproach” (**1 Timothy 3:2**)
 - Not “I guess what he did was OK”