

# What Statistics Say About Alcohol

By Jim Davis

Last month we looked at what the Bible says about alcohol. Drinking alcohol is not expressly forbidden in the Bible but drunkenness is forbidden. While there are no direct commands against drinking in the Bible there are principles of wisdom that should be applied that would support abstinence or a very restricted use of alcohol. Principles of wisdom are not always based upon direct commands from the Bible. They may be made on the basis of promises or principles or examples. Last time we wrote about commands and wisdom principles from the Bible on this issue. In this article I would like to consider wisdom principles from our experience and the principle of edification.

## **Wisdom principles from our experience.**

There were a total number of 41,611 traffic deaths in the United States in the year 1999. Of those traffic deaths 15,786 were alcohol-related deaths. Alcohol contributed to 37.9% of the total traffic deaths to place as the leading factor in motor vehicle deaths (NHTSA, 1999). They estimate that 4 million people are victimized each year by 2.6 million drunk driving crashes. And the alcohol-related crashes cost society \$45 billion in damages and an estimated \$7 billion in medical costs (Miller ET al, 1999). Wisdom cries out from these statistics. Do not drink and drive!

I once had a conversation with a man who drove trucks for a living. Our conversation took place just a few days after he had been involved in a fatal accident that claimed the life of a woman. His word to me was, "if I had been drinking alcohol I would be facing a serious charge of manslaughter right now." Wisdom declares that the pleasure of drinking is not worth the separation from family that incarceration will bring.

Wisdom cries again when we consider the problem of alcohol and youth. "It is estimated that 240,000 to 360,000 of the nation's 12 million current undergraduates will die from alcohol related causes and this is more than the number that will get MA's and PhD's combined" (Eigen, 1991). "During a typical weekend, an average of one teenager dies each hour in a car crash. Nearly 50% of those crashes involve alcohol" (NHTSA, 1999).

The average age of first alcohol use predates the teenage years. It is 12 years of age. There is no debating the association of drinking and the loss of sexual purity among our youth. And according to a recent annual survey taken by the University of Colorado 88% of unchurched youth drink beer as compared to 80% of our church youth.

Jason Barber was driving drunk when friends challenged him to a race. They were just out for a good time but it ended up costing the life of Jason's 15-year-old brother Aaron. In 1991 Jason was convicted of manslaughter and served 3 ½ years of a 6-year-sentence. Since his release he has spoken publicly to thousands of young people about the consequences of drinking and driving. The risks simply are not worth it. Wisdom principles from our experience and from recent statistics suggest that abstinence is the best policy.

## **The Principle of Edification**

The Apostle Paul says, "it is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles" (Romans 14:21). The principle of edification should also be considered in the issue of a Christian drinking. Technically this is another wisdom principle

from Scripture but I saved it for last because I think it transcends other principles of wisdom. Romans 14 and 15 addresses the issue of conflict among Christian brothers who hold differing views on debatable matters of conduct.

Seeking the glory of God should be the first priority of every Christian. Pursuing this purpose in life will solve many problems for us in matters of questionable conduct. Along with the pursuit of the glory of God should be the determination to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. "For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died" (Romans 14:15).

In light of this Scriptural admonition care should be taken in the use of alcohol in our homes or churches. One person having trouble with alcoholism could be severely damaged by our liberty. Although I believe that Christ celebrated the Passover as the Jews have for millennia with wine, today we use grape juice for this reason. Consideration for the weaker brother should extend to areas of conscience as well.

**"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31**

### **Sources**

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