
THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK...

*An analysis of Biblical truths concerning
alcohol and the believer's relationship to it*

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Introduction

Over the past thirty years, Christianity has experienced a significant shift in its belief, attitude and behavior concerning alcohol. Historically, the Church of Jesus Christ considered alcohol evil and labeled the consumption of alcohol a sin. Today, many Christian, pastors and local churches have legitimized and endorsed alcohol and its consumption.

Many Christians have justified drinking alcohol with human reason, scientific research and Biblical references. Citing Bible verses as proof-texts does not sanction alcohol or any other behavior. The diligent and proper interpretation of Scripture is the basis for one's beliefs and behavior. During the past thirty years, Christians have used many reasons to justify alcohol and its use. These include:

1. The word "wine" in the Bible always refers to fermented grape juice.
2. Ancient peoples were ignorant and undeveloped in the procedures and practices of preserving grape juice.
3. Water was polluted and grape juice could not be preserved therefore they had to drink alcohol.
4. Alcohol was part of Israel's and the early church's culture.
5. Wine was used and consumed by Christ and His disciples at the Last Supper.
6. Christ turned water into wine at the Wedding in Cana of Galilee.
7. God blessed Israel with wine in the Promised Land.
8. The Bible only forbids drunkenness.
9. Drinking is acceptable for a person who can control how much alcohol he consumes.

Why has alcohol become such an explosive and contentious issue? In large measure it is due to the local church's lack of preaching and teaching on the subject. During the second Great Awakening, pastors and evangelists across America preached against the evils of alcohol. Also, many books were written on the topic such as The Temperance Bible Commentary and The Wine Question.

The true reason for alcohol's acceptance is selfishness and sinful desires. Christians seek pleasure and relief in alcohol rather than in the sufficiency of Scripture. No one should be surprised by the length Christians go to for justifying sinful behavior.

The Bible is explicit, clear and unified in its message to man about alcohol. **Alcohol has absolutely no place in any person's life.** Alcohol is evil and its consumption is a sin against God.

There are four reasons why we are studying the Bible's teaching about alcohol. First, the church's purity and testimony is at stake, as well as pleasing and glorifying God. Second, our church has had to confront the presence and use of alcohol in one of its member's home. Third, it has become a very common issue in pertaining to church membership. Fourth, the church needs to develop its convictions concerning alcohol and contend for the faith letting the world know where it stands on this issue.

Believers must be able to clearly and graciously defend their Biblical convictions. It is never appropriate for a believer to make statements such as "That is the way it has always

been,” “that is what the church believes,” or “statistics prove that alcohol is destructive to a human being.”

This study has five objectives:

1. Understand the wine making process.
2. Correctly define the Greek and Hebrew words predominately translated using the word “wine.”
3. Address drunkenness, sobriety, social drinking, and the nature of alcohol.
4. Address “problematic” passages of Scripture such as the Wedding in Cana of Galilee, the Lord’s Supper, and the references to “wine” in the Pastoral Epistles.
5. Pass a church resolution stating the Bible’s teaching about alcohol and our church’s behavior with respect to alcohol.

In conclusion, it is vital that every child of God approach this study objectively with a receptive and teachable spirit. Any preconceived ideas, feelings or selfishness must be eliminated. Failing to be objective in Bible study leads solely to unbiblical, biased and subjective conclusions, and shame before the Lord. May God bless and guide us in this study over the next several weeks as we seek to learn God’s Word, develop convictions, defend the faith and please God.

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LESSON ONE: THE WINE MAKING PROCESS¹

Understanding the wine making process is important to the proper interpretation of Scripture. Scripture is to be interpreted using the literal, historical, and grammatical method. For example, Paul writes to the Thessalonian Church, “Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss [I Thessalonians 5:26].” The historical method of interpretation would recognize that greetings included putting one’s hands on another person’s shoulders and placing a peck on each cheek. In our present culture, greeting a person would include a handshake and a friendly remark.

Throughout history, dating back to the ancient Egyptians and Sumerians, the wine making process has remained constant; technology, however, has changed refining the wine making process. One must not conclude that ancient civilizations were ignorant Neanderthals. Regardless of time, man has the inherent ability to observe, learn, reason, and make scientific discoveries and advances because he is created in the image of God.

Winemaking is not a natural, unaided process; rather, it is a deliberate practice requiring the correct proportion of ingredients and a controlled environment. Incorrect proportions of ingredients or an unfavorable environment turns grape juice moldy, spoiled or into vinegar. For grapes to ferment and become wine proper proportions of sugars, yeast, water, oxygen or air, and a controlled air temperature is required.

The winemaking process begins with freshly picked, ripe clusters of grapes. The grapes are pressed and the must, also called mustum, which is composed of the clear juice, pulp and seeds are released and collected in a vat. The remaining parts of the cluster left in the presses are discarded. If colored wine is to be produced, the grape skins must be added so that the wine can absorb the grape skin’s pigment. Before grape skins are added to the must, the whitish coat on the grape skin called the bloom must be removed or neutralized. The bloom inhibits winemaking because it contains wild yeast, bacteria, and fungal spores. If these contaminants enter the must, the juice will spoil rather than become alcohol. Modern winemakers discard the grape’s natural wild yeast and add their own strain of cultured yeast to the must.

Proper temperature is critical to winemaking. Maintaining a temperature between 50-75 degrees Fahrenheit is required for the must to ferment and turn to wine. Today’s winemakers use modern equipment such as cooling pipes to maintain proper temperature because fermentation naturally creates heat.

To begin the fermentation process, a winemaker measures the must’s sugar content. If the must’s sugar content is below eighteen percent (18%), he adds sugar. If the must’s sugar content is above twenty-six percent (26%), water is added. This is done because yeast and sugar must interact to make wine.

Once the temperature and the sugar to water proportion is correct, yeast is added to the must starting the fermentation process. Yeast turns the fructose and glucose into alcohol.

¹ Material for the fermentation process of wine is derived from “Fermentation (wine),” [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/fermentation_(wine)), 8 July 2010, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/fermentation_\(wine\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/fermentation_(wine)); “Alcohol in the Bible,” [Women’s Christian Temperance Union of South Dakota](http://wctu-sd.org/literature/books.asp), 8 July 2010, <http://wctu-sd.org/literature/books.asp>; Rev. William Patton, [The Laws of Fermentation and the Wines of the Ancients](#) (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1871), pp. 15-18.

This chemical reaction creates carbon dioxide (CO_2) which naturally rises to the top of the must and is released into the air. The release of CO_2 into the air allows the remaining atoms of oxygen to produce ethyl alcohol (ethanol) and trace amounts of methyl alcohol (methanol). During fermentation the solid matter in the must rises to the top and forms a hard cap. The hard cap must be repeatedly broken up because it stops the CO_2 from escaping. If CO_2 cannot escape from the must the sugar and yeast produce an acetic acid which turns the alcohol into vinegar.

When alcohol is produced, yeast falls to the bottom of the fermentation tank as a sediment known as lees. The lees is discarded. The wine is placed into air tight containers and stored in an environment to preserve the wine until it is consumed.

LESSON TWO: PRESERVING GRAPE JUICE²

Among the many misconceptions about grape juice and wine is the notion that fermentation is impossible to prevent.³ One contemporary author states, “[t]he fruit of the vine [was] impossible to preserve without the natural process of fermentation taking place...The process of fermentation was impossible to prevent.”⁴

This statement is factually incorrect. First, ancient peoples had processes which kept must from becoming alcohol. Pliny the Elder (23 AD to 79 AD), a contemporary of Christ, cites several methods people used to preserve grape juice in his book Natural History. These methods are confirmed by other men such as Cato, Aristotle, and Homer.

Second, the necessary components and proportions for winemaking are not inherent in grapes. The bloom not only contains wild yeast which is necessary for winemaking, it contains bacteria and fungal spores which spoil grape juice thus inhibiting fermentation. Furthermore, the grape skin keeps the bloom and the sugars inside the grape from contact with one another. For wine to be made, a winemaker must add yeast so that the alcohol content can be between nine and fourteen percent.

One method used for preserving grape juice was boiling. Grape juice was boiled to reduce its water content and create a concentrate or syrup (such as can be purchased in a grocery stores freezer section). Boiling eliminates any possibility for juice becoming wine because alcohol is destroyed at 170⁰ Fahrenheit, yeast is instantly killed at 120⁰, and the sugar content would be too high. Juice boiled down to one-third its water content was called Sapa, to one-half was called Defrutum. Sapa and defrutum are the Greek words *gleukos* and *glukus*.

Another method for preserving grape juice was dehydration. Whole grapes with unbroken skins were dried in the sun. The grape became a raisin. In order to make juice, water was mixed in a container with raisins, Once the raisin absorbed the water, the juice would be extracted and consumed. The ancients referred to this “wine” as “raisin wine.”

A third method for preserving grape juice was sealing. As soon as the pure juice was separated from the must, it would be placed in casks and sealed with pitch so that air could not be introduced to the juice and begin fermentation. To further protect the juice in the casks, olive oil or some other substance was added. These substances would float on top of the juice inhibiting air from reaching it. In addition to substances which floated on top of the juice, preservatives such as sulfur and eggs were placed into the casks with the juice. These preservatives would naturally absorb alcohol keeping it from interacting with the juice.

² Information contained in this lesson is derived from John Bostock and H.T. Riley, ed. And trans., The Natural History of Pliny, vol. 3 (London: Henry D. Bohn, 1855), pp. 248-250; John Ellis, The Wine Question in the Light of the New Dispensation (New York: published by the author, 1882), pp. 65-82; G. W. Samson, The Divine Law as to Wines Established by the Testimony of Sages, Physicians, and Legislators Against the Use of Fermented and Intoxicating Wines, Confirmed by Egyptian, Greek, and Roman Methods of Preparing Unfermented Wines for Festal, Medicinal, and Sacramental Uses (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1885), p. 312.

³ Jeff Straub, “Please – No Alcohol Beyond this Point. Thank you. Keeping the Saints Sober: Does the Bible Permit Drinking in Moderation?” Baptist Bulletin, July/August 2010, p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35

Another common method used to preserve grape juice was filtration. The grapes were pressed and the must was pressed through felt, wool, or a linen bag so that the yeast in the bloom was separated from the juice. The juice would be sealed in containers for later use. Yeast is a thick, gel like substance which is unable to pass through a fine filter with the juice and sugars.



A final method for preserving grape juice was subsistence. Subsistence was similar to filtration. Immediately upon pressing grapes, the must was placed in new barrels, sealed, and placed in the ground or cold water for a minimum of forty days to as much as the winter season. Cold temperatures prevent fermentation. As time passed, the juice would naturally separate from the must. When the barrel was retrieved and unsealed, the must would be skimmed off the juice so that only pure juice was left. The juice would then be consumed. If the separation process was not complete, the juice would undergo as many subsistence processes as was necessary to have pure, unfermented juice. To ensure that fermentation would not take place during subsistence, new barrels were used. Older barrels had residue internally and could contain yeast.

The ancients utilized these preserving processes because grape juice was an intricate part of their society, and because the climate in the Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, and the Mediterranean region was hot during the harvest season—well above the temperature conducive to preserving fruits or vegetables. As an additional note, the weather was too hot during the evening and daytime for must to ferment and become alcohol.

LESSON THREE: THE HEBREW WORDS TRANSLATED “WINE”

One common mistake people make when they read the Bible is that every time the word “wine” is used it always refers to alcohol. Three erroneous conclusions result from this mistake. First, alcohol was a common, basic, acceptable staple of everyday life for every person. Second, everyone drank alcohol. And third, God approves of and blesses man with alcohol.

Our present English language uses the word *wine* to solely refer to alcohol, and *juice* to refer to unfermented grape juice. This has not always been the historical usage of the word wine. About four hundred years ago, the English word *wine* was used for both alcohol and juice. This is why the KJV uses the word wine.

The etymology of our English word wine is derived from the Indo-European language family, as well as the Hebrew language. Of the Indo-European language family, the German word for wine is *wein*, the Armenian word for wine is *gini*, the Gothic word for wine is *vein*, the Latin word for wine is *vinium*, and the Greek word is *oinos*.⁵ The Indo-European words for wine share a common etymology with the Hebrew word *yayin*, which means “fruit of the vine.”⁶ In fact, the Greek word used to translate *yayin* in the Septuagint (LXX) is *oinos*.

The Old Testament uses twelve Hebrew words for alcohol, grape juice, and juice from fruits other than grapes such as pomegranates. Some of the Hebrew words solely allude to unfermented drink; some refer to either alcohol or juice. The various Hebrew words are mainly translated into the English words “wine, strong drink, mixed wine, blood [of grapes], vinegar, [and] honey.” The following Hebrew words for unfermented drink or alcohol are listed below with their definitions, synopses of its use in the Old Testament, and various Scripture references.

DOM

This Hebrew word refers to the juice contained inside the grape’s skin (Dt. 32:14; Gen. 49:11). The juice contained in a grape is unfermented. *Dom* is translated “blood [of grapes].” This word is also used to refer blood contained inside the human body (Gen. 4:10). The blood of grapes is never red like human blood. Grape juice only turns red when it absorbs red grape skins’ pigment.

CHEMER

Chemer means “ferment, boil, foam.” It is used in several Old Testament passages to refer to an upset, queasy stomach or intestines (Lam. 2:11), and to water which effervesces when it is agitated (Ps. 46:13; Hab. 3:15). This word can be defined as either alcohol or juice. It is questionable if the wine used in King Belshazzar’s idol feast was alcohol because the king is quite sober in his thoughts when he sees God’s finger write on the wall “Me-ne, Me-ne, Te-ke-*l*, U-phar-sin [Dan. 5:1-28].”

⁵ Leon Fields, *Oinos: A Discussion of The Bible Wine Question* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883), p. 31.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

Chemer is used with the Hebrew word *dom* (Dt. 32:14). Unquestionably it refers to juice freshly pressed from the grape. Agitating grapes through presses produce a juice with a foamy layer on top.

CHOMETETS

This Hebrew word means “bitter, sour.” Bitter, sour wine is vinegar (Dt. 2:14; Ps. 69:21). Vinegar is grape juice which has undergone acetous fermentation. There is no alcoholic content after acetous fermentation. *Choments* describes a bitter human soul (Ps. 73:21; Prv. 10:26).

AHSIS

“Sweet juice” is the meaning of this Hebrew word (Is. 49:26; S of S. 8:2). This word cannot be defined as alcohol because fermentation turns sugars into alcohol. *Ahsis* corresponds to the Latin word *mustum*, which is a freshly squeezed juice containing its inherent sugars (Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13).⁷

MESEK

Mesek means “mingle, mix.”⁸ It was a mixed drink which base was fresh grape juice, sapa, defrutum, alcohol or another liquid. The base was mixed with water, spices or other substances to enhance the drink’s flavor or aroma (Ps. 102:9; Prv. 9:2, 5; Is. 5:22).⁹ At times, grape juice was mixed with other substances to create medication.¹⁰ This Hebrew word refers to different color threads woven together (or mingled) to make a tapestry (Ex. 26:36; 36:37).

Mesek is used with *yayin*, the general Hebrew word for the fruit of the vine; it can either refer to alcohol or grape juice (Ps. 9:2). It cannot be concluded that *mesek* is always mixed alcoholic drinks. One reason for this is that *mesek* is used with liquids other than grapes which were mixed (Ps. 102:9). One present example is coffee. Coffee is a mixture of water, coffee beans, creamers, sugar, and other flavorings.

ASHISHAH

This word is translated “flagons” (II Sam. 6:19; Hos. 3:1). Flagons were cakes made with nuts, raisins or other dried fruits such as dates. It would be equated with the modern fruit cake. The raisins in the flagons could not have been alcoholic because raisins were grapes dried in the hot sun. The sun’s temperature would be too hot for fermentation.

MISHRAH

This word is only used once in the Old Testament (Num. 6:3). It is translated “liquor [of grapes].”¹¹ It refers to the juice extracted from the grape (unfermented). Liquor does not always

⁷ William Patton, The Laws of Fermentation and the Wines of the Ancients (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1871), p. 59.

⁸ Tirosh Lo Yayin; or, the Wine Question Considered in an Entirely Novel Point of View; with a Scheme of Hebrew Wines, and Illustrations (Philosophical and Critical) of the Principal Passages of the Bible Connected with the Subject, London: J. Pasco, 1841, p. 7.

⁹ John Bostock and H.T. Riley, ed. And trans., The Natural History of Pliny, vol. 3 (London: Henry D. Bohn, 1855), p. 237.

¹⁰ John Bostock and H.T. Riley, ed. And trans., The Natural History of Pliny, vol. 3 (London: Henry D. Bohn, 1855), pp. 222.

¹¹ William Holladay, ed., A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Bibleworks for Windows version 7.

mean alcohol. For example, *liquor* refers to vanilla extract or chocolate liquor (the butterfat extracted from the chocolate bean).

SHEKER

Sheker is a Hebrew word meaning “to drink largely, make merry, glut, drenched, intoxicated” (Gen. 9:21).¹² The noun forms are translated *strong drink* and *drunkards* (Deut. 14:26; Ps. 69:12; Prv. 20:1). It is used in reference to drinks derived from fruits other than grapes, such as palms.¹³ *Sheker* can be non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks (Num. 6:3).

This Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament to refer to libations, or drink offerings, which Israel gave to God (Num. 28:7; Ex. 12; Deut. 16; Lev. 23). Drink offerings were given to God at Passover and during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Because God’s statue required no leaven, or yeast, to be present in the home and in the sacrifices made in the tabernacle and temple, *sheker* must refer to unfermented grape juice.

Sheker would be similar to America’s Thanksgiving Day where Americans eat merrily and excessively. This was just what occurred when Joseph feasted with his brothers in Egypt (Gen. 43:34).

SOBE

“To guzzle, drink long and deep, imbibe” is the meaning of *sobe*.¹⁴ It refers to wine or juice because it is used with the Hebrew word *yayin* (Prv. 23:20). In the Old Testament, it seems to be used every time in reference to wine (Dt. 21:20; Prv. 23:20-21; Is. 56:12).

TIROSH

Tirosh is translated “wine, new wine, and sweet wine.”¹⁵ It is always used for juice or must. This word is used with corn and olive oil—signs of God’s blessings upon Israel. In the Millennium, God will bless Israel with *tirosh* in the Promised Land (Jer. 31:12; Joel 2:19-24).

In Hosea 4:11, *tirsoh* is translated “new wine.” It is used in a negative way, not because *tirosh* can refer to alcohol but because Israel has taken God’s abundant blessings and trusted in them for their security and assurance rather than God. This situation would be similar to a man blessed by God with abundant wealth trusting in his riches for his security rather than in God (I Tim. 6:17-18; Mark 10:24-25).

YAYIN

This Hebrew word is the most frequently used word in the Old Testament. It is a generic word which can imply any form of liquid derived from the grape in all of its stages or forms (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) (Gen. 9:21; Jer. 48:33; Is. 16:10).¹⁶ It means “fruit of the

¹² Tirosh Lo Yayin; or, the Wine Question Considered in an Entirely Novel Point of View; with a Scheme of Hebrew Wines, and Illustrations (Philosophical and Critical) of the Principal Passages of the Bible Connected with the Subject, London: J. Pasco, 1841, pp. 7-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶ William Patton, The Laws of Fermentation and the Wines of the Ancients (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1871), p. 55.

vine.” It comes from a root word, *yanah*, meaning “to press or squeeze.”¹⁷ It is related to another Hebrew word, *yayan*, which means “to froth, foam.”¹⁸

CONCLUSION

A careful and systematic study of the Hebrew words frequently translated *wine*, and the contexts where those words are found reveals that a person cannot assume that every Old Testament reference automatically implies alcohol. When a person makes this assumption, he or she is carelessly and impulsively interpreting Scripture based upon preconceived ideas rather than a good exegesis of God’s Word. Sometimes at the root of preconceived ideas is a person’s desire to consume alcohol or a willingness to twist Scripture to justify one’s desires. The believer has an obligation to diligently study and “rightly divide the Word of Truth [II Timothy 2:15].”

¹⁷ Tirosh Lo Yayin; or, the Wine Question Considered in an Entirely Novel Point of View; with a Scheme of Hebrew Wines, and Illustrations (Philosophical and Critical) of the Principal Passages of the Bible Connected with the Subject, London: J. Pasco, 1841, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

LESSON FOUR: THE GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED “WINE”

Whereas twelve Hebrew are used to refer to *wine*, there are only five words in the Greek language. The same format utilized for the study of the Hebrew words will be used for understanding the Greek words relating to “wine” in the New Testament. In addition to the Greek words’ definitions, Scripture references and synopses, there will be references made to the Septuagint (LXX), the Koine Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

The Septuagint is a translation which was completed about three hundred years before Christ (300 BC). It was used worldwide because the world at that time spoke mainly Greek. Not even the Hebrews after their exile in Babylon spoke Hebrew (Neh. 13:24), they spoke Aramaic. By the time the New Testament Church was established, the Jews had learned the languages of the people in the lands where they lived (Acts 2:6-11). Because Greek was the main language during Christ ministry on the earth and because it was the language people understood and used, Christ and the writers of the New Testament made wide use of the Septuagint when referring to the Old Testament.

The LXX is not inspired. Inspiration pertains exclusively to the original autographs, never to any translation (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21). The LXX, however, can be a useful tool in understanding the Hebrew words for wine as well as which Greek words correspond to Hebrew words and vice versa.

GLUKUS/GLEUKOS

Glukus is a root word in the Greek language which means “sweet, delicious, delectable, agreeable to taste.”¹⁹ Its opposite word appears in James 3:11 and Revelation 10:9-1—it means “bitter, sour, sharp.”²⁰ The corresponding English word to *glukus* is glucose, a sweet sugar. In the LXX, *glukus* is used to refer to the sweetness of honey (Jud. 14:14, 18; Ps. 18:11). Nowhere in the New Testament is *glukus* used in reference to alcohol. In secular sources such as Homer and various Roman Antiquities, *glukus* referred to sweet grape juice, unfermented must, honey, and sapa.²¹

Gleukos is a form of its root word *glukus*.²² It means “must, unfermented wine.”²³ Its only occurrence in the New Testament is in Acts 2:13. Peter and the apostles were being mockingly accused of being drunk with must, or unfermented grape juice. The mocking crowd recognized that these men were not drunk with alcohol, but full of grape juice. It is possible that the crowd acknowledged, in a mocking way, that Christ’s followers the apostles were total abstainers from every form derived from the grape.

¹⁹ James Donnegan, A New Greek and English Lexicon (Boston: Hilliard, Gray & Co., 1840), p. 329.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1003.

²¹ Tirosh Lo Yayin; or, the Wine Question Considered in an Entirely Novel Point of View; with a Scheme of Hebrew Wines, and Illustrations (Philosophical and Critical) of the Principal Passages of the Bible Connected with the Subject, p. 131.

²² A New Greek and English Lexicon, p. 328.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 328

OXOS

This Greek word means “sour wine, vinegar.”²⁴ It comes from a root word meaning “pointed, sharp, acid, sour, pierce, penetrating.”²⁵ It is used in the LXX for *chomets*, the Hebrew word for vinegar. It is used in reference to Christ being given vinegar on the cross (Mk. 15:26) as well as a sharp sickle and sword (Rev. 2:12; 14:14). The penetrating taste of vinegar results in distorting facial expressions, a shaking of the head, and a comment about its sour taste.

SIKERA

Sikera means “fermented, inebriating liquor.”²⁶ It is used in reference to John the Baptist’s Nazirite vow (Luke 1:15; Num. 6:3). It corresponds ten times in the Old Testament to the Hebrew word *shekar*. This Greek word definitely references alcohol.

OINOS

This Greek word is the most frequently used word in the New Testament. It is a general, all encompassing word for any form of the liquid of the grape from non-alcoholic to alcoholic. It means “fruit of the vine.”²⁷ Its Hebrew counterpart is *yayin*, the Hebrew word for the fruit of the vine.

In Matthew 9:17, the word *oinos*, translated *wine*, is accompanied by the adjective *new*. The adjective *new* means “new in time, come into existence” and not “new in quality.”²⁸ Therefore, the wine must refer to juice and not fermented juice as that would be “new in quality.” Historically, grape juice was placed in new animal skin containers because juice could possibly ferment and break older, used containers.

Revelation 19:15 cites a winepress—a combination of *oinos* and the Greek word for a vat in which grapes were pressed. Pressed grapes can only produce juice. *Oinos*, therefore, can refer to juice.

While the above two New Testament passages clearly show that *oinos* can be unfermented juice, there are some passages where *oinos* refers to wine such as Ephesians 5:18. In Mark 2:22, the word *oinos* is used three times. Of its three citations two have the adjective *new* modifying the noun *wine* and one does not. The time the word *wine* does not have the adjective *new*, it refers to fermenting juice which produces carbon dioxide, places pressure on the animal skin container, and breaks the container. Clearly, Mark 2:22 distinguishes between non-alcoholic *oinos* and alcoholic *oinos*.

CONCLUSION

After studying the Greek words associated with wine, juice and alcohol, the same conclusion must be reached as with the Hebrew words—wine does not automatically mean alcohol. Once again, preconceived ideas or personal desires must neither substitute nor supplant the careful and objective exegesis of God’s authoritative Word.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 308.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 908-909

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1118.

²⁷ Frederic Richard Lees and Dawson Burns, The Temperance Bible Commentary (London: S.W. Partridge, 1868), p. 425.

²⁸ Richard Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 233.

LESSON FIVE:

ALCOHOL'S INCOMPATIBILITY WITH CHRISTIANITY

Regardless of the world's and many Christians' opinions approving alcohol, God's statements about alcohol have not changed. The Bible is clear, consistent and unchanging in its teaching—alcohol has absolutely no place in any person's life. God's Word is the authoritative, sufficient and timeless standard of truth by which all of man's creeds, conduct, and opinions are to be tried. Man must move from truth to behavior, not vice versa.

The Apostle Paul wrote Ephesians so that believers will understand the riches of His grace and how it relates to their behavior. Salvation is not just the forgiveness of sins and a secure home in heaven; it is living a holy and blameless life before God on this earth. God expects His children to live differently from the culture surrounding him.

The three objectives of this lesson are:

1. To understand how the unregenerate world naturally thinks and behaves;
2. To understand how God expects His children to think and behave; and,
3. To discover why alcohol is never to be consumed by a child of God.

Throughout Ephesians, Paul reminds believers of their totally depraved nature, disposition, thinking and behavior before they were saved. These reminders demonstrate why so many people, even believers, approve of alcohol.

- What main statement describes the total depravity of man (2:1-3)?

- How does the totally depraved man think (4:17-19)?

- Why do all unregenerate men think and behave similarly (2:2)?

- What is the result of the unregenerate man's thinking (4:19)?

- How is man's communication affected by total depravity (4:29-31; 5:4)?

- What sins are committed (4:22-32; 5:3-5)?

God's grace completely changes the unregenerate man's life. Whereas the unregenerate man could only think and behave sinfully, the believer can be holy and blameless before God both in this world and before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul writes,

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

- Which adverb describes the believer's behavior (4:1)?

- What does this adverb mean?

- What should be the believer's approach to behaving worthily (4:2-3)?

- Where does the believer receive teaching and guidance for holy and blameless conduct (4:11-16)?

- What main statement describes the total depravity of man (2:1-3)?

Beginning in Ephesians 4:17, Paul systematically lists God's expectations for living and holy and blameless life. Each expectation is a cohesive unit beginning with either the conjunction *therefore* or *then*, followed by a main imperative and concluding with specific imperatives, guidelines and explanations supporting the main imperative. Each unit is built upon the previous unit which ultimately returns to and reinforces the all-encompassing imperative "walk[ing] worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

After the five units specifically commanding the believer to live a holy and blameless life, there is the statement that living godly is a spiritual battle, a war. The believer must be ready for this battle because Satan is trying to prevent the believer from living in accordance to God's revealed Word. One method Satan uses is alcohol.

Section 1 (Ephesians 4:17-32):

- What imperative is given?

- How is this imperative obeyed?

- What must be changed first before one's actions and speech?

Section 2 (Ephesians 5:1-6):

- What imperative is given?

- Which persons is the believer to love?

- In what specific ways is love exhibited?

- What sins are opposed to love?

- Who attempts to prevent a believer from exhibiting love?

- What method is used to accomplish this attempt?

Section 3 (Ephesians 5:7-14):

- What imperative is given?

- In what two ways does the believer obey this imperative?

- How should a believer consider and approach sin?

- Why are light and darkness important to this imperative?

- Why is the believer's testimony before the world critically important?

Section 4 (Ephesians 5:15-6:9):

- What imperative is given?

- What does the believer need in order to obey this imperative?

- What prevents the believer from living wisely?

- How does alcohol prevent the believer from living holy and blameless?

At this point, it is important to understand the imperative and its explanation “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess[.]” The verb is an inchoative verb which pertains to the start or beginning of the verb’s action. The verse literally translated is, “Do not begin to become intoxicated by means of wine.” The verse states that no alcohol is to be consumed and that a child of God is not to think unbiblically about alcohol. Unbiblical thinking about alcohol is beginning the process of intoxication.

Added to this imperative is a statement of fact and reality about the nature of alcohol and its effect. *Dissipation*, translated *excess*, is the nature of alcohol. The literal translation of this indicative statement is, “in which [wine] is dissipation.” A person does not have to consume a drop to be affected. He is affected by having a friendly disposition towards alcohol.

The word for excess in the Greek language is “*a-so-tee-ah*.” It comes from the same root word as the English word “saved/salvation.” It means “to rescue, preserve, save, secure.” With the negative prefix, the word means “lose, lost, peril, injurious, hazard, danger, death, insecurity.” The believer who has a friendly disposition towards alcohol is in danger, lost, injured, in peril, and dead. He does not experience eternal damnation; rather, based on the context of the verse, he is losing eternal rewards, exhibiting foolishness, fellowshipping with darkness, walking in darkness, incurring God’s anger, and not understanding God’s will. Overall, He has placed himself in a dangerous and destructive place.

Paul is making reference to alcohol in a unit of Scripture which focuses on wisdom and foolishness. By doing this, Paul is recalling and reinforcing Old Testament theology about alcohol found in the book of Proverbs (20:1; 23:29-35).

Proverbs 20:1:

- What statements are made about alcohol?

- What statement is made about a person who denies the reality about alcohol?

- How does this verse harmonize with Ephesians 5:18?

Proverbs 23:29-35:

- What imperative is given?

- What are the results of consuming alcohol?

- What sins result from consuming alcohol?

- How do the sins cited in this passage compare to the sins listed in Ephesians 5:3-5?

- From Ephesians 5:22-6:9, what relationships are affected by alcohol?

- How are these relationships affected when taking into consideration the sins listed in Proverbs 23:29-35 and Ephesians 5:3-5?

Section 5 (Ephesians 6:10-22):

- What imperative is given?

- To what is the believer's life and behavior compared?

- What is Satan's goal with respect to every believer?

- How does Satan succeed?

- How should a believer view alcohol?

- How should a believer approach the topic of alcohol?

LESSON SIX: ALCOHOL'S IMPACT ON THE MIND

Alcohol is a chemical substance which detrimentally impacts the mental faculties, will, words and deeds of every person who consumes it. Thoughts, understandings, discernment and judgments determines how a person behaves (Prv. 4:23, 23:7; Mt. 6:21).

The overall teaching of Ephesians 5:18 applies to a person's ability to think, reason, discern, and judge. The believer is to be actively filling his mind with spiritual truths so that he can make right decisions about the will of God (Eph. 5:17; Phil. 4:8). A person is a fool when he either allows foolish thinking to reside in his mind or rejects Biblical truth. Having a friendly disposition towards alcohol is foolish and sinful.

The purpose of this lesson is two-fold:

1. To learn how alcohol negatively impacts the mind, and
2. To understand the many, specific results of skewed judgments.

No person or believer sets his heart on becoming a fool. Yet, the inherent nature of alcohol leads to it. A person does not need to consume alcohol to become a fool, he only needs to have a friendly disposition towards it. Not realizing the destructive nature of alcohol makes a person a fool (Prv. 20:1).

The Bible uses the word "err" in reference to alcohol. The Hebrew word for "err," *shaw-gaw*, means "to go astray." This word refers to sins committed without intent or on account of ignorance. This word is used for sheep who wander away from the fold because they were distracted by eating and not paying attention (Ez. 34:6). In Psalm 19:12, "err" is translated "secret faults." A person cannot drink alcohol and claim that any sin he commits is alcohol's fault. Whether sins are committed intentionally or unintentionally, the person is liable before God (Job 1:4-5).

- In Isaiah 28:7, why were Judah and her priests erring?

- According to Hosea 4:11, what does alcohol result in?

- What does the word "heart" mean in Hosea 4:11?

Alcohol always leads to problems. Whenever a person's thinking, understanding and judgment are impaired there is sin and disastrous consequences. A lack of Biblical understanding about alcohol is just as destructive as consuming it. Furthermore, a lack in judgment about alcohol reveals a flaw in a person's thinking which is indicative of flawed judgments in other areas of life (Micah 2:11). Study the following passages and record what the disastrous impacts and results of alcohol are.

- Genesis 9:21-26

- Genesis 19:30-33

- Daniel 5:4; Isaiah 5:11, 22-25

- Joel 3:3

- Proverbs 31:4-5

- Isaiah 28:7

- Genesis 9:21-26

- Hosea 4:11-12

- Proverbs 23:29-35

- Luke 12:45-46, 21:34

- Romans 13:13

LESSON SEVEN: ALCOHOL'S IMPACT ON THE BODY

Alcohol is a chemical substance classified as a poison, toxin and carcinogen. It impacts man mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Alcohol's impact on the human body impedes his ability to faithfully serve God. The human body is the only tool the believer has to serve God.

When a believer objectively considers alcohol's effect on the whole man, he can only conclude that alcohol has absolutely no place in a servant of God's life.

In this lesson, the following four points will be explored:

1. Only God owns and ought to control the believer's body,
2. The believer's body is a tool for service to God both now and in eternity,
3. God requires His children to care for their bodies, and
4. Compiled medical research affirms Biblical propositions concerning the human body.

Usually, salvation is thought of in terms of the souls of men. Rarely is the human body considered a part of one's salvation. The body has an important place in the believer's life both in progressive sanctification and glorification. When a sinner trusts Christ as Savior, ownership and control of the believer's body becomes God's. Any servant of God who desires to please the Lord must understand the Bible's teaching about the use of his body.

- In I Cor. 6:12, to what perverse belief did the Corinthian believers hold?

- How did this belief impact their view of their bodies (v. 13a)?

- What was Paul's rebuttal in I Cor. 6:13b?

- Why does Paul refer to the body and fornication in I Cor. 6:12-21?

- What declaration is made about the body in I Cor. 6:19-20?

- What reason supports this declaration (I Cor. 6:19-21)?

- What must the believer do with his body (I Cor. 6:19-21)?

Every day believers make many choices. Many times those choices are made with a temporal frame of mind rather than with an eternal one. Even when a person thinks about the eternal aspect of choices, consideration about the human body is excluded. The believer's body will be resurrected and glorified one day. The believer's choices and use of his body during his life on earth will be a factor in his bodily service to God in eternity.

- What statement is made about the body in I Cor. 6:14?

- What will happen to the believer's body according to I Cor. 15:20-23?

- What will differ between the saints' bodies according to I Cor. 15:38-41?

- According to I Cor. 15:58, what will determine the differences between the saint's bodies?

- What is God's wish for every one of His children according to I Thes. 5:23?

The human body is not evil. It is a tool for serving God both now and in eternity. Also, the believer can use his body to serve his sin nature. Choices determine who the believer serves. Decisions for caring for one's physical body is just as important for serving God as the choices a person makes. Consuming any alcohol regardless of the amount affects one's body and ability to serve God just as much as a friendly disposition towards alcohol impedes him from being a suitable tool for God's use. If a person's speech is slurred, unable to walk or blacked out because of alcohol consumption, how can he serve God?

- What imperative is given in Rom. 6:12?

- What imperative is given in Rom. 6:13?

- What does the word "instrument" mean in Rom. 6:13?

- What does the word "yield" mean in Rom. 6:13?

Millennia of medical research has agreed with God's Word—alcohol destroys the human body (Prv. 23:28-35; Is. 29:9; Hos. 7:5-6). Pliny, in his scientific work entitled Natural History, cites alcohol's impact on the stomach, circulatory system, lungs and digestive system.²⁹ Other scientists and historians, who were contemporaries and predecessors of Pliny, have made similar conclusions to Pliny concerning the negative impact of alcohol on the human body.³⁰ Present day research conducted by The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), John Hopkins University and other reputable institutions have concurred with conclusions previously reached throughout history. The Bible is the greatest and authoritative medical journal and standard for medicine known to man (II Pet. 1:12-21).

In the NIAAA's published research, alcohol "is known to be a human carcinogen based on sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in human studies that indicate a causal relationship between the consumption of alcoholic beverages and cancer."³¹ As a carcinogen, alcohol

²⁹ G.W. Samson, The Divine Laws as to Wines (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1885), pp. 380-397.

³⁰ Samson, The Divine Laws as to Wines, (entire book).

³¹ *Report on Carcinogens, Eleventh Edition*. Washington D.C.: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2000.

consumption has been linked to mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, and breast cancer.³² In a 1999 medical study of 1.2 million cancer patients, 23,139 cases of cancer were directly linked to alcohol consumption.³³ In that study, not every cancer case directly attributed to alcohol was caused by heavy drinking.³⁴

The following chart enumerates alcohol intoxication's impact on the body.³⁵

BAC (g/100ml of blood or g/210 l of breath)	Stage	Clinical symptoms
0-0.05	Subclinical	Behavior <i>nearly</i> normal by <i>ordinary</i> observation. (emphasis mine)
0.03-0.12	Euphoria	Sociability, talkativeness, increased self-confidence, decreased inhibitions, diminution of attention, loss of judgment and control, beginning of sensory-motor impairment, loss of efficiency in finer performance tests.
0.09-0.25	Excitement	Emotional instability, loss of critical judgment, impairment of perception, memory and comprehension, decreased sensory response, increased reaction time, reduced visual acuity, peripheral vision and glare recovery, sensory-motor in coordination, impaired balance, drowsy.
0.18-0.30	Confusion	Disorientation, mental confusion, dizziness, exaggerated emotional states, disturbances of vision and of perception of color, form, motion and dimensions, increased pain threshold, muscular in coordination, staggering gait, slurred speech, apathy, lethargy.
0.25-0.40	Stupor	General inertia, approaching loss of motor functions, markedly decreased response to stimuli, marked muscular in coordination, inability to stand or walk, vomiting, incontinence, impaired consciousness, sleep or stupor, possible death.
0.35-0.50	Coma	Complete unconsciousness, depressed or abolished reflexes, subnormal body temperature, incontinence, impairment of circulation and respiration, possible death.
0.45+	Death	Death from respiratory arrest.

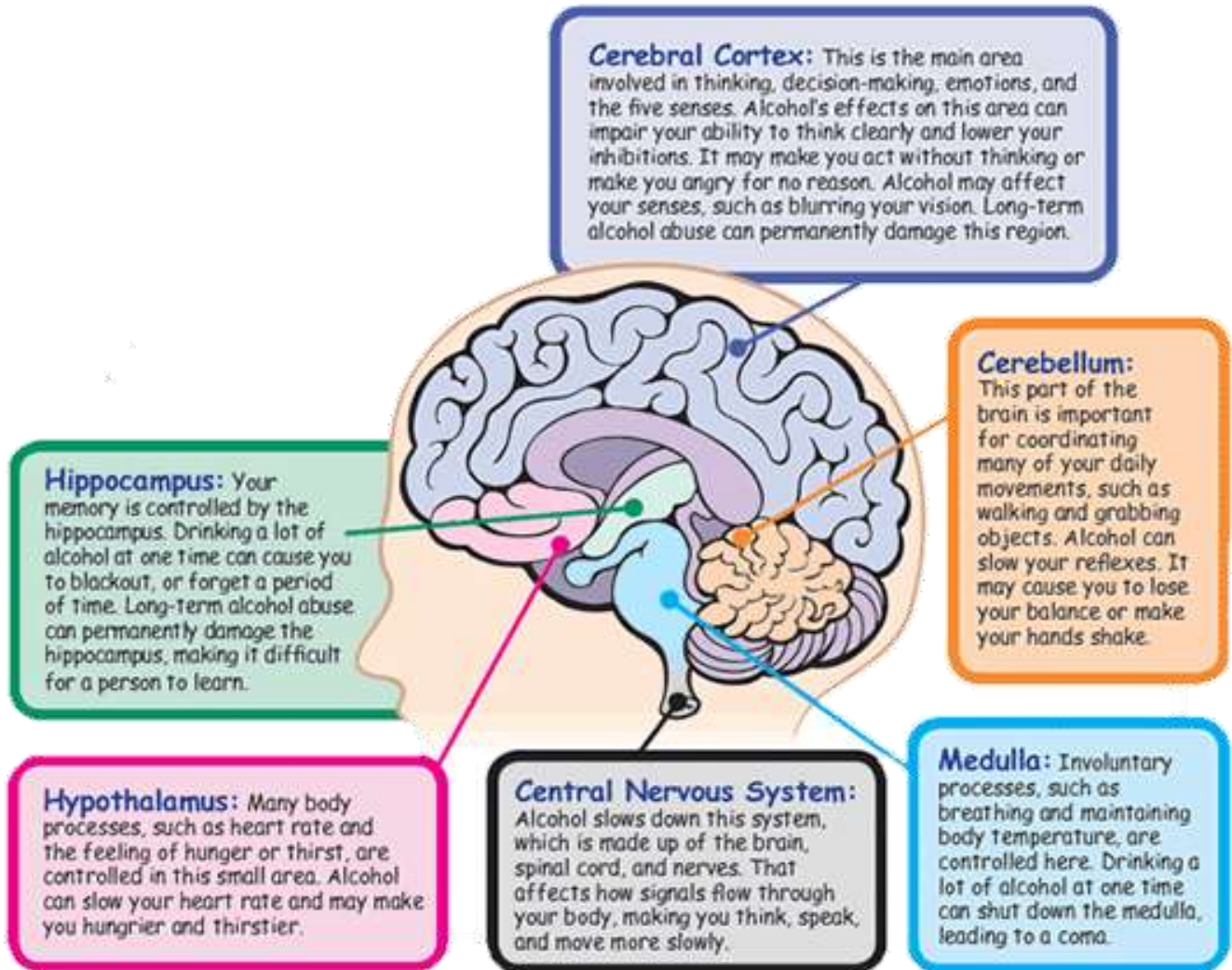
³² Ibid.

³³ *NTP Report on Carcinogens Background Document for Alcoholic Beverage Consumption*, North Carolina: Integrated Laboratory Systems, 1999, p. 292.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 5-7.

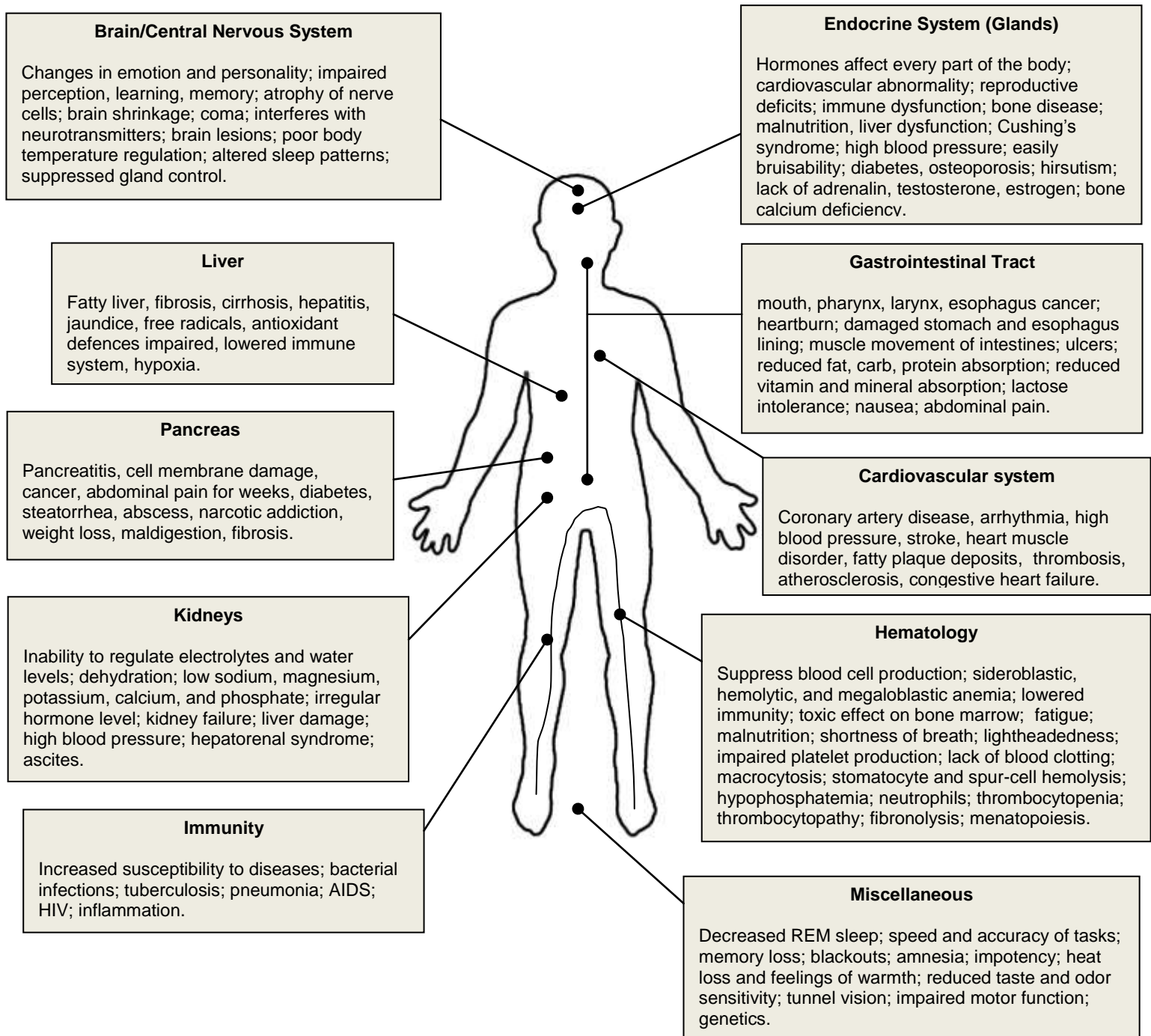
³⁵ <http://www.intox.com/physiology.asp>

The following diagram shows alcohol's impact on the brain.³⁶



³⁶ <http://www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov>.

The following chart explains alcohol's impact on the whole body.³⁷ This chart is not comprehensive.



³⁷ *Alcohol Health and Research Journal*, Springfield, VA: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, vol. 27, 2003.

LESSON EIGHT: ALCOHOL'S IMPACT ON OTHERS

It has been well-established, understood, and universally accepted throughout history that alcohol leads to sinful behavior. Alcohol affects a person's judgment which in turn impacts his behavior. Alcohol not only affects the person consuming it, it negatively impacts the home, society and the local church.

In this lesson, three truths will be established:

1. Alcohol affects the family;
2. Alcohol affects society; and,
3. Alcohol affects the local church.

It has been accurately stated that alcohol "rolls over the family like waves crashing on the shore."³⁸ Those who consume alcohol or have a friendly disposition towards alcohol have a blind-spot when it comes to the effects alcohol can have on loved ones. Family problems arising from alcohol consumption include domestic violence, emotional abuse, marital conflicts (arguments, silent treatment, growing apart), infidelity (prostitution, pornography, internet sex, finding someone who "understands"), jealousy, economic insecurity (loss of job, poor financial decisions, and bankruptcy), divorce, and fetal alcohol effect.³⁹

The impact upon children caused by drinking parent(s) can be far-reaching and devastating. Studies have shown that a child's behavior can be impacted in various ways such as depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, physical and emotional abuse, and running away from home.⁴⁰ Genetics profoundly impact a child's growth beginning in the womb. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome leads to birth defects, mental retardation, behavioral and emotional problems, low birth weight, alcohol withdrawal, motor skill deficiency, and even death.⁴¹

While many family problems are attributed to alcohol, a believer whose judgment is skewed by a friendly disposition towards alcohol will have family problems too. Being filled with spiritual truths is the only way to having God's blessings in the home.

- How is a wife affected by alcohol (Eph. 5:22)?

- How is a husband affected by alcohol (Eph. 5:23-28)?

³⁸ <http://addictionrecoverybasics.com/how-alcohol-abuse-affects-family/>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ <http://aathom01.wordpress.com/2008/07/21/growing-up-alcoholic-the-effects-of-alcohol-abuse-on-children>

⁴¹ <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh25-3/153-234.htm>

- How is a marriage affected by alcohol (Eph. 5:29-33)?

- How are children affected by alcohol (Eph. 6:1-3)?

- How are parents affected by alcohol (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; Prv. 22:6)?

Alcohol destroys society just as it destroys families "as waves crashing on the shore." Operating a vehicle or other equipment, employment, rape, murder, pregnancy, sexual immorality, friendships, and witnessing to the unsaved are impacted by alcohol. In the workplace, alcohol affects worker safety, productivity, employer and employee health care costs, attendance, and workplace turnover.⁴² Alcohol creates tension between workers, management, and co-workers.

- What imperative is given in Luke 10:29-36?

- What should a believer's behavior be according to Matthew 5:13-16?

- According to Rom. 3:12-18 and Heb 12:14; how does alcohol affect society?

- How are employees affected by alcohol (Eph. 5:5-8)?

⁴² http://samhsa.gov/SMA_08-4350.2008

- How is an employer/manager affected by alcohol (Eph. 5:9)?

Alcohol affects the local church just as much as it does family and society. Alcohol results in hurt brethren, disunity, and torn apart relationships. People who leave the church because of alcohol can affect their spouse's and children's relationship with others in the church. The New Testament includes about one hundred verses relating to "one another." These verses encompass three relationships: believers toward the unsaved, believers toward believers, and church members toward church members. Below are several verses using the words "one another." Write down what the "one another" entails. Note how alcohol affects it.

- John 13:34

- Romans 12:10

- Romans 14:19

- I Corinthians 12:25

- Galatians 5:13

- Galatians 6:2

- Ephesians 4:2

- Ephesians 4:32

- Philippians 2:3

- Colossians 3:9

- I Thessalonians 4:18

- Hebrews 10:24

- John 13:34

LESSON NINE: THE WEDDING AT CANA IN GALILEE

One Scripture passage frequently cited justifying the use of alcohol is the wedding which occurred in Cana (John 2:1-13). Cana is the place of Christ's first miracle, turning water into wine.

Those who utilize this passage have neither properly nor thoroughly studied it. They have allowed assumptions, preconceived opinions of themselves or others, and superficial conclusions to become the basis for their beliefs and behavior. Being unashamed before God requires properly studying and interpreting Scripture. Exegesis is the proper method for interpreting God's Word. Pleasing oneself and justifying one's opinions and behavior is the product of eisegesis (II Peter 1:12-21).

The purpose of this lesson is three-fold:

1. To definitively conclude whether the wine at the wedding was alcohol or juice;
2. To dispel opinions and assumptions which are not based in God's Word; and
3. To understand the purpose and truth for the miracle.

THREE ASSUMPTIONS

The first unbiblical assumption is that the word "wine" refers to alcohol. The Greek word for "wine" is "oinos" (οἶνος). It is the generic word which encompasses both fermented and unfermented grape drink. It cannot be dogmatically concluded that the drink served at the wedding was alcohol.

The next improper assumption is that alcohol is always served at every wedding. I can say that I have attended many weddings and celebrations where no alcohol was present. In fact, my own wedding did not have alcohol present.

The last unsupported assumption is that those who attended the wedding were intoxicated because the text uses the two words "well drunk" (John 2:10). The word translated "well drunk" is "methuo" (μεθύω). The word means "to indulge to excess, to drink to intoxication unmixed wine or wine."⁴³ In the New Testament, This Greek word is used as a verb eleven times and as a noun sixteen times.

After surveying the Scriptures passages where "methuo" appears, the only conclusion a person can have is that "methuo" refers to excessive indulgence. In I Corinthians 11:21, "methuo" is clearly associated with a meal. Before the Corinthian Church celebrated the Lord's Supper, they had a love feast where the members would bring a meal to share with the other members. Some believers who came to the meal without food and did not eat, others brought a very large meal and ate excessively. The ones who indulged excessively in food were "drunk."

Associated with the Greek word "methuo" are Biblical truths about overindulgence, temperance or self-control, and patience (Jude 1:4; Titus 2:2-15; I Cor. 9:25; Prv. 25:27; II Pet. 1:6). A believer who overindulges in anything is guilty of "drunkenness." Drunkenness is a sin which listed with other sins of excess such as the cares of this world, brawling and excessively drinking grape juice (Luke 21:34; I Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; Hosea 4:11).

⁴³ James Donnegan, A New Greek and English Lexicon, p. 830.

In John 2, the supply of drink was exhausted in three days. A wedding celebration lasted seven days. The people at the wedding overindulged in the beverage which was served by the host of the wedding. Consider this. If alcohol was served at the wedding, and if a seven day supply of alcohol was drunk in three days, then how would people know the difference in the quality of the wine? It is well established that alcohol affects the mind's judgment and discernment in the sense of taste as well as communication. Probably and logically the beverage served was grape juice.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLE

Of the four Gospels John's gospel is evangelistic. Every event contained in John has this purpose: "[t]hese things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31). The turning of water into wine is referred to as a "sign." A *sign* (σημείον) is a pointer which is used to prove a specific fact. The miracle at Cana points to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah sent from God. The miracle was never about giving the wedding attendees more grape juice to drink, it was the message of salvation made possible through Christ's death and shed blood (John 2:4, 6, 13). The twelve disciples saw the miracle, understood its message, and believed on Jesus for eternal life (John 2:11).

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MIRACLE

The wedding at Cana was held near Passover (John 2:13). The good wine provided by Christ represented His blood which was shed on the cross. Furthermore, it showed Christ to be the "Passover Lamb" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Passover is the Jewish celebration commemorating Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and bondage by the power of God. Deliverance out of Egypt and bondage centered around the shed blood of a spotless, slain lamb applied to the home's doorposts in order to avoid perishing (Ex. 12).

Before Passover was celebrated, two actions had to be completed. Leaven or yeast had to be completely removed from the home and, those in the home had to be purified by washing with water (Numbers 9, 19). The water which was to be used for purification from uncleanness was the water turned into *wine* by Christ (John 2:6-9). This miracle clearly reveals that the forgiveness of sins is found in Christ's shed blood.

The comparison between the qualities of the two wines is crucial in determining whether the *wine* provided by Christ was alcohol or juice. The better wine was served second. One Jewish custom of a wedding was to serve the best wine first. A wedding attendee remarked that the best wine was used last—a breaking with tradition.

The Greek word "good" (καλός) means "beautiful, good, [and] advantageous."⁴⁴ It comes from a root word meaning "clean, clear, pleasant, [and] charming."⁴⁵ The Greek word for a "broom," a cleaning instrument, shares the same root word with "good."

The word "worse" (ἐλάσσων) means "small, less, inferior."⁴⁶ The good wine provided by Christ symbolizes that Christ's blood is superior to the blood of animals symbolized by the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 714.

⁴⁵ Georg Curtius, Principles of Greek Etymology, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1886), p. 160-161.

⁴⁶ James Donnegan, A New Greek and English Lexicon, p. 467.

worse wine (Heb. 1:3; 9:11-10:10). In the Old Testament economy, the blood of animals was a covering for sin until Christ shed His blood, the sufficient sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. The miracle at the wedding in Cana proclaimed the Savior had come to shed His blood for sins and provide eternal life, thus putting an end to the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Leaven was removed from the home for Passover. Since leaven is required for making alcohol, the wine at the wedding could not have been alcohol. Furthermore, the *wine* at the wedding had to be juice because Christ is the sinless Lamb of God.

When the passage is carefully studied by exegesis, and all the facts added up, the wine served at the wedding in Cana could only be grape juice.

LESSON TEN:

MEDICAL USE OF ALCOHOL

For several years now, numerous studies have reported that the moderate consumption of alcohol each day is beneficial to a person's health. The two benefits attributed to alcohol are healthy antioxidants and the reduction of stress and anxiety.

Christians have "jumped on the bandwagon" consuming alcohol and extolling wine's benefits. In addition to justifying alcohol's consumption for its health benefits, some Christians cite the Bible's approval for wine as a medicine with two specific Bible passages—Proverbs 31:6-7 and I Timothy 5:23. Does the Bible completely ban the use of alcohol? Or, does the Bible make an exception for the medical use of alcohol?

The purpose of this lesson is three-fold:

1. Thoroughly examine Proverbs 31:6-7 and I Timothy 5:23.
2. Address how the believer should react to scientific research.
3. Explore God's remedy for stress and anxiety.

In Proverbs 31:6-7, two imperative are given: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish [...]" and "Let him drink [...]." One's initial reading of these verses could lead to the conclusion that alcohol is to be used for the pain and misery associated with death. It would be comparable to the use of morphine or even "medical" marijuana.

This Scripture passage must be evaluated as any other Scripture passage—in its grammatical use. In Hebrew grammar, imperatives are used to "express a command, permission, request, or advice [often ironical]."⁴⁷ In addition to the use of grammar, an objective student of God's Word must consider a Bible verse's context.

- Who is writing to King Lemuel (Proverbs 31:1-2)?

- Are the various imperatives in Proverbs 31 given as commands, requests, permissions, or advice?

- What imperatives are given in Amos 4:4 and I Kings 2:22?

- Does God expect the imperatives of Amos 4:4 and I kings 2:22 to be obeyed? Why?

⁴⁷ Rev. A.B. Davidson, Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Hebrew Syntax (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 86.

- In light of Proverbs 31:4-5, what point is Lemuel’s mother making about alcohol?
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In I Timothy 5:23, Timothy was given the following imperatives: “Drink no longer water” and “use a little wine.” Just like Proverbs 31:6-7, the initial appearance of this verse would be that wine is a remedy for medical conditions as prescription and over the counter medication.

In determining the proper interpretation of this verse, one must consider Timothy’s position as a pastor, the pastoral office’s qualifications (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9), the Greek word translated wine, and the connection of these two imperatives. Beyond these considerations, the interpretation of Scripture abides by this truth: Scripture never contradicts itself.

The word for “wine” is the Greek word “oinos.” It is a word which refers either to alcohol or grape juice. Therefore, one cannot definitively conclude that Paul is commanding Timothy to drink alcohol.

Next, the main qualification for entering into and maintaining the pastoral office is blamelessness. The pastor is to be above reproach in his character and conduct. If Timothy was to consume even the minutest amount of alcohol, even for his medical condition, he would not have been above reproach.

One word used in the list of qualifications for the pastor is “vigilant.” It literally means “completely separate and far away from alcohol.” This word is used nine times in the New Testament. It is used in reference to pastors, believers, deacons’ wives, and older men. “Vigilant” appears to be used figuratively for one’s mind being alert and not “dull” in thinking, reasoning and judging. Consuming any amount of alcohol affects one’s ability to properly think, reason, and judge. In addition to the qualification “vigilant,” “sober, of good behavior, patient, not a brawler, ruleth well his own house, [and] have a good report of them which are without” applies to alcohol and the pastor.

In addition to the Greek word for wine and the pastoral qualifications are two imperatives. The two imperatives in I Timothy 5:23 are joined with the conjunction “but.” Timothy had a medical condition in his stomach. This stomach ailment affected his body in several ways. Timothy attempted to remedy his condition with copious amounts of water. Most likely Timothy was an abstainer from grape juice because of its possible appearance as alcohol and the serious negative effect it could have on his testimony and the pastoral office. In light of these facts, Paul commands Timothy to use a small amount of grape juice mixed with water.

During the New Testament time period, grape juice was often mixed with other compounds such as water, salt, oils and herbs. This mixture was given to a patient for remedying certain physical ailments.⁴⁸ In fact, historical medical books cite that sweet wine (sapa or defrutum) was only useful for the stomach and digestion when it was mixed with water.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ John Bostock and H.T. Riley, ed. And trans., The Natural History of Pliny, vol. 3, pp. 247, 461-462.

⁴⁹ G.W. Samson, The Divine Laws as to Wines, p. 146.

Based upon the abundance of evidence, the only conclusion that can be reached is that the wine referred to in I Timothy 5:23 was grape juice. I Timothy 5:23 cannot be a justification for consuming alcohol. God's Word is clear and consistent—it is completely banned regardless of the reason for which it is used.

Scientific conclusions come into conflict with Scripture at times. Other times science compliments Scripture. Science cannot trump Scripture because only Scripture is authoritative and true. Science, which is a product of human reasoning, must always yield to God's Word.

Science has concluded that antioxidants are good for a person's health. Antioxidants are not created in the winemaking process; they are naturally present in grape juice. These facts do not contradict the Scriptures. However, the scientific conclusion that a person should drink alcohol so that he benefits from antioxidants contradicts Scripture. Thus, this scientific conclusion is flawed. This question should be asked, "Why must a person drink alcohol to receive health benefits when the same health benefits can be obtained from grape juice?" Another question to be asked is, "Since science and the Bible agree that alcohol is a toxin, why should a person use a poison to obtain health benefits?"

- What is God's Word according to John 17:17?

- Can truth change and remain truth?

- What statement is made about God's Word in II Peter 1:19?

- Why should the believer always yield to the Scriptures according to II Peter 1:20-21?

- What does Scripture teach about alcohol?

- What does the unregenerate man do with God's revealed truth according to Romans 1:17-23?

- How should a Christian think based upon Colossians 2:6-8 and Ephesians 4:17-19?

- What warning does God give the believer in Colossians 2:18?

Medical research has concluded that the moderate use of alcohol reduces stress. Alcohol does affect the mind, and therefore does affect the level of anxiety and stress. Alcohol never solves the problem of stress and anxiety, it only causes a person to stop thinking and caring. In fact, the effects of alcohol compound problems (Proverbs 23:29-35; Matthew 6:24).

The believer needs to deal with anxiety and stress in the way God prescribes in His Word. Alcohol is never God's cure. Read Matthew 6:19-34 and Philippians 4:4-9. Both passages inform a person of how to address stress and anxiety. After you study the passages, describe how you cope with stress and anxiety?

LESSON ELEVEN: WINE IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

Five references are made to *wine* in the Pastoral Epistles. “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake...,” was covered in the last lesson. Of the remaining four references, two reference the pastoral office (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7), one references the deacon’s office (I Timothy 3:8), and one refers to older ladies (Titus 2:3).

At first glance one could possibly conclude that the pastor must refrain from alcohol whereas deacons and older women can drink alcohol in moderation. This conclusion would contradict the clear teaching of Scripture—alcohol has no place in a person’s life. Because the Bible is true in every part, it cannot contradict itself.

The purpose of this lesson is three-fold.

1. To show that the Scriptures are clear and non-contradictory about alcohol.
2. To understand the symbolism of wine in the Pastoral Epistles.
3. To apply the Biblical principles derived from wine to pastors, deacons, and older women.

In the Bible, wine is employed both literally and figuratively. Figuratively, wine refers to an extravagant, excessive lifestyle. The pastoral office’s qualification listed in I Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:7 is “para-oinos.” It literally means “not alongside the wine.” The Greek word, “para-oinos,” means “pertains to, customary at banquets and drinking parties, dissolute, intemperate.”⁵⁰ This word represents an excessive, extravagant, intemperate behavior or lifestyle.

I Corinthians 11:21 illustrates an excessive lifestyle. Before the Corinthian church celebrated the Lord’s Supper, they gathered together for a love feast—the modern day church’s form of a potluck supper. Each attendee would bring a meal to share with one another. The verse states, “For in eating everyone taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” Some of the believers were not drunk with alcohol, rather they were drunk with food—they overindulged extravagantly in food out of contempt towards believers who had little or no food. The ones with food were banqueting with merriment, intemperance, and disregard for others.

Another similar passage illustrating the figurative use of wine is Romans 14:21. Paul states he would not even drink grape juice if it would cause a brother in Christ to stumble in his walk with God. The Bible principle is that a believer must control his behavior for the spiritual well-being of others. Behaving extravagantly and excessively can be detrimental to other believers.

The application of the word “para-oinos” relating to the pastor is clear—he is not to live an extravagant, excessive and intemperate lifestyle. The pastor’s lifestyle is the godly example for the local church to follow. If his life is unworthy of being followed, his credibility and ability to lead is compromised. Kings, presidents, and emperors lose integrity with people when they live extravagantly and disregard the plight of people. Rehoboam is one such

⁵⁰ James Donnegan, A New Greek and English Lexicon, p. 966.

example (I Kings 12). Nero, the emperor of Rome, continued to live excessively even when Rome was burning. This in part led to his death.⁵¹

This same Biblical principle is exhibited in the other qualifications following “not given to wine.” The pastor must not to be a brawler, a striker, or covetous (I Timothy 3:3). The pastor must “contend for the faith” and “fight the good fight of the faith.” While the pastor must be bold, and at times command with authority, he is never to be a bully, pugnacious, run roughshod over the flock with disregard for the flock. Instead, he is to be loving, gracious, resolute, and under-control. A life of temperance gives the pastor much integrity before the church and the unsaved.

The figurative use of wine is used in reference to the deacon’s office and older women. Both are leaders in the church, but not in the same way the pastor is. Deacons lead by taking care of the daily needs of the church as the word “deacon” indicates. Older women lead younger women in training them to live godly lives as a woman, wife, and mother.

The deacon’s qualifications are not as strict as the pastor. This is indicated by the qualification, “not given to much wine.” They are not to be intemperate or extravagant just as the pastor. The qualifications for both the pastoral and deacon’s office is not a matter of the pastor being more holy or more spiritual—the standard of holiness is the same for all believers—rather it is about leadership, credibility, and effectiveness.

Concerning the older ladies, the statement of Titus 2:3 is that they are “not to be a bond-slave to much wine.” Older ladies are to be examples to younger ladies of a temperate, godly lifestyle. The application of the Biblical principle of temperance does not mean that a woman cannot have nice things; rather it means that a woman is not to be “high maintenance.” She needs to be content and live within her husband’s provisions. Neither is she to be contentious, nor nag her husband pressuring him to give her whatever she wants. It is good for a husband to provide for his home, and shower his wife with gifts. It is never good to for a husband to provide anything for his wife because he is pressured by his covetous, contentious and angry wife.

It is clear, based upon Scripture and careful exegesis that God’s Word does not contradict itself. The teaching of Scripture is clear and unified. Alcohol has absolutely no place in a believer’s life; and in reality, any person’s life.

May God graciously give us the strength to follow, defend and propagate His truth revealed in His Word with grace, mercy, love and boldness. *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness...But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. [Jude 1:3-4, 20-25]”*

⁵¹ Arthur Murray, ed., The Annals of Tacitus (London: A.J. Valpay, 1830), vol. 3, book 15-16.

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