

Can a Christian Drink Alcohol?

By
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This question—Can a Christian drink alcohol—has been asked through the ages and will continue to be asked.

It wasn't that long ago that news broke that [Olympic gold medalist snowboarder Shaun White had been charged with vandalism and public intoxication](#). On my Facebook wall, I posted the following comment: "This just in...and the gold medal for character enhancement, once again, goes to alcohol."

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For years, well-meaning, sincere Christians have debated the subject of drinking).

The Bible is also clear that mature Christians should avoid causing others to stumble by drinking ([Romans 14:21](#).)

I have yet to hear from anyone who drinks how alcohol enhances anything or blesses anyone. Max Lucado said, "One thing for sure, I have never heard anyone say, 'A beer makes me feel more Christlike... Fact of the matter is this: People don't associate beer with Christian behavior.'" I've yet to see how it improves someone's testimony or makes anyone a more effective witness for Christ.

Quite the contrary, like Shaun White mentioned above, or Richard Roberts, Oral Roberts' son, who was arrested in Tulsa, Oklahoma, driving under the influence, the result doesn't enhance your testimony. Rather, it takes away from what testimony you had.

Should a Christian Drink Alcohol?

Recently, a friend of mine, former megachurch Pastor John Caldwell, wrote an article in Christian Standard magazine called [*To Drink or Not to Drink?*](#) John's article explained why he has personally abstained from drinking alcohol and dealt with the bigger issue of the contemporary church becoming more and more like the world.

Not surprisingly, a number of people responded to John's article and some called him to task for taking such a strong stand against drinking. In response to the responses, my good friend Ken Idleman, former President of Ozark Christian College and now Pastor of Crossroads Christian Church in Evansville, Ind., wrote these words, which are among the very best I've ever read on this issue. I asked Ken for his permission to share them here.

"OK, I am conscience bound to weigh in on this one... For a minute, forget about making a definitive case for or against 'drinking' from the Bible. Here's the truth from logic and real life. [*No one starts out*](#) to be an alcoholic. Everyone begins with a defensive attitude saying, 'I'm just a social drinker and there is nothing wrong with it!' no one says, 'It is my ambition that someday I want to lose my job, my health, my self-respect, my marriage and my family. Someday I want

to be dependent on alcohol to get through my day.' Yet, this is the destination at which several millions of people have arrived. Why do you suppose that is? It is because alcohol is promoted and elevated as a normal/sophisticated activity in life... It is also expensive, addictive and enslaving. People get hooked by America's number one legal drug. And just like all illegal drugs, alcohol finds its way into the body, the bloodstream and the brain of the user/abuser."

I had two uncles whose lives were wrecked by alcohol. The exception you say? Hardly. It is not what they wanted when they dreamed of their futures when they were in their 20s. Praise God, they were wonderfully delivered in their 60s when the grace of God became real to them. And can you imagine it?... They got their lives back by becoming total abstainers by the power of the Holy Spirit!



One of my most memorable conversations in the state penitentiary in Jefferson City, Mo., was with a young man facing a 28-year prison sentence for the brutal sexual assault of his own 8-year-old daughter. I will never forget the image. The tears literally ran off his chin and splashed on his shoes as he gushed, 'I guess I did it. I don't know. I was drunk at the time.'

“Some Christians Can Handle Drinking Alcohol Just Fine”

Listen, some of those who are defensive in response to Dr. Caldwell's thoughtful and courageous article will want to revise their text if, in a few years, they discover that they were able to handle their drinking just fine, but their son or daughter could not. Answer honestly. Could you live with the knowledge that your dangerous exercise of Christian liberty factored into your children's ruin? Or, if your loved one is killed some day in a head on collision by a driver under the influence who crossed the center line, will you still be defensive of drinking?

A good friend during my growing up years was the only child of social drinking parents. When his folks were away, he would go to the rathskeller [German for tavern] in the basement where he developed a taste for alcohol. I won't bore you with the details. He is 65 today. A broken life, broken health, broken marriages, a broken relationship with his only son, a broken relationship with his only grandchild, a broken career and a broken spirit that...tragically...he tries daily to medicate with the alcohol that led him to this tragic destination.

Hey, thanks for indulging my rant. Like my friend John Caldwell, I confess to setting the bar high for Christian leadership [especially] when it comes to aesthetic holiness. Call me a 'right-wing fundamentalist.' Call me a 'throw back to the days of the tent evangelists.' Call me a 'simpleton.' Call me a 'minimalist.' But, if you do, go ahead and also call me a 'watchman on the wall' where the welfare of my family [children, in-laws, grandchildren] and my church family is concerned."²

Personally, I've yet to have my first beer and have no desire to start now or to drink alcohol of any kind. At the same time, I don't judge those who believe they have freedom in Christ to drink. But when asked, I always tell people I don't believe it's the best choice.

The bottom line is this: The question really isn't *CAN A CHRISTIAN DRINK?* Rather, it is: *SHOULD A CHRISTIAN DRINK ALCOHOL?*

¹ David Faust, *Voices From The Hill*, (Cincinnati, OH: Cincinnati Bible College & Seminary, 2003) 252.

² John Caldwell, "[To Drink or Not to Drink,](#)" *Christian Standard* 11 August 2012, 18 September 2012.