

## Do We Really Care? by Dr. Tracy W. Jagers

The last time I went to my doctor for my annual checkup, they gave me a clipboard and informed me that I needed to update my file. As usual, it started off with a list of health questions about my health and my family health history. In that list were two questions that have been there for as long as I can remember. “Do you drink alcoholic beverages?” and “Do you smoke?” There must be an important reason for these two questions.

When I began putting together information for the Southern Baptist Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday, I was appalled to find only one SBC resource for this special emphasis day. It was a bulletin cover from Lifeway. That was it! Nothing from the ERLC or the SBC website. Why do medical professionals ask the questions above unless there are significant biological and neurological consequences to these activities?

In researching the consequences, I was shocked to find the plethora of information came from a surprising, yet reliable source – the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The government agency seems to be more concerned with this topic than numerous others who claim to care. I am attaching the sources I encountered. You may dig deeper by going to these sites. Still, I was disappointed to find so little information from our own denomination.

I have been a law enforcement chaplain for 28 years and a Christian Academy Chaplain for five years. I invited numerous drug awareness speakers to come to the academy and give their presentations on the dangers of drug use. The narcotics departments of both police and sheriff’s departments exposed marijuana as “a gateway drug to harder drugs.” You don’t hear that proclaimed widespread in our culture today!

Alcohol is a stupefying depressant and smoking and vaping have serious attachments to cancer. Where are the voices warning our society about these dangerous addictive practices? Lest I sound like Elijah crying that I am the only one pronouncing these warnings, here are a list of resources to verify my concerns to you, your family, and your churches.



[Brain Health and Future Outcomes | NAS | Marijuana | CDC](#)

[What are marijuana's effects? | National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#)

[The Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking: A Deadly Habit \(smokingaddiction.org\)](#)

[Vaping Facts: 10 Vital Facts Vapers and Healthcare Professionals Must Know \(smokingaddiction.org\)](#)

[Alcohol's Effects on the Body | National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\) \(nih.gov\)](#)

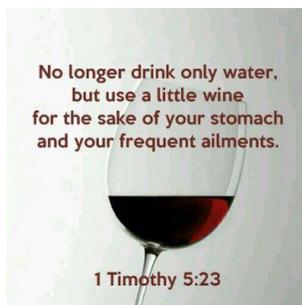
From Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) [2019 Campaign Report \(flippingbook.com\)](http://flippingbook.com)

And, also attached below is an article I submitted to the SBC Facts and Trends magazine. It was not published because the magazine has never dealt with the topic of alcohol since I delivered it to them. Are we so concerned that we might offend people that we would allow them to get sick and/or die from these addictive properties? God forbid that we have become so much like the world that these drugs have been deemed acceptable to the church. They are not according to God's Word.

### **Comparing Whiskey to Water Romans 14:13-23**

By Dr. Tracy W. Jagers

In our present existence we utilize phrases like comparing "apples to apples," when two items are alike, and "apples to oranges" if they are not. I will use a hyperbole (an extremely elaborate exaggeration) in comparing the wine of Biblical times with the wine of today. It is like comparing whiskey to water.



There appears to be a renewed receptivity to social drinking among the younger generations (Gen-Xers and Gen-Yers), and I hear statements like, "Paul told Timothy to, '...use a little wine for your stomach's sake and for your frequent infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23 NKJV),' or 'Jesus turned water into wine, therefore...'" When we utilize statements like these to prove a point, we should ask ourselves if they are proof positive or just proof-texts. Paul's endorsement was only for medicinal purposes.

There have been many disagreements over the passages above. Can they be cross-referenced? First, do these passages condone today's fermented and distilled liquors? Second, are there acceptable medicinal equals to the wine of Paul's time? Third, was the alcoholic content of the wine of biblical times comparable to today?

Let me just interject here that I come from a family with negligible alcoholic struggles. Personally, I have chosen never to ingest any alcohol other than that which is found in Nyquil or cough suppressants. As a pastor and police chaplain for many years, I have seen the destruction and death that alcoholism can cause. I did have an uncle that I really loved who gave himself over to alcohol abuse. He lost his wife, his child, his job, his dignity, and his self-respect. I remember overhearing my grandpa and my uncle arguing over his addiction one night. Even at a young age I thought to myself, "If that's what alcohol does for you, I want no part of it." I am a true "teetotaler."

The amount and frequency of alcohol is important, but so is the percentage of alcoholic content within a specific drink. These statistics are helpful in determining the effects of alcohol. “In the United States, one ‘standard’ drink contains roughly 14 grams of pure alcohol, which is found in:

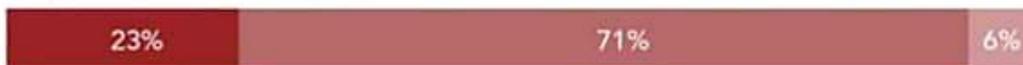
- 12 ounces of regular beer, which is usually about 5% alcohol.
- 5 ounces of wine, which is typically about 12% alcohol.
- 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, which is about 40% alcohol.”

## Views on Alcohol

Among Protestant churchgoers

Agree Disagree Not sure

Scripture indicates that people should never drink alcohol.



Scripture indicates all beverages, including alcohol, can be consumed without sin.



Scripture indicates that people should never get drunk.



LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com

On the subject of today’s alcohol, one must uncover the impact of alcohol on the body. For an in-depth study, I recommend examining the following web link – <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alcohols-effects-body>

One New Testament passage that specifically deals with the issue of alcohol, and its effect on the witness of a believer, is found in Romans 14:20-23. This passage is referring to the believer’s conscience. In verses 14-17, Paul says, “I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 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. Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (NASB).”

I agree with William Hendriksen when he states that the Romans 14:13-23 passage is targeted at the weaker brother – instructing the weaker not to drink wine which was used as a libation in animal sacrifices. The weaker was to abstain from such practice. John Murray adds to this view by including the idea that drinking wine was “involved in

the scruples of the weak,” and as such, should be abstained by all believers – not as a legalistic rule, but for the edification of other believers who may be still struggling with their own weakness.

The use of alcohol in the US is not a comprehensively acceptable practice. There are approx. 5,000 alcohol-related deaths per year for people under the age of 21. More than 190,000 annually incur emergency room-required injuries; it impairs decision-making abilities; increases the risk for physical and sexual assault and stifles brain development for same age group. Alcohol is connected with 75,000 U.S. deaths a year ([Death by alcohol: More people are dying from drinking too much \(nbcnews.com\)](#)). Ever wonder why a doctor asks their patients if they use tobacco or alcohol during an examination? Because both cause long-term health risks!

So, what does the social-drinking-believer’s lifestyle say to the children and early teens of our culture? I believe it is sending a mixed message. Southern Baptists have promoted a resolution of abstinence concerning alcohol use (see *On Alcohol Use in America*, June 2006 [On Alcohol Use In America - SBC.net](#)). There are pastors who are turning a blind eye to this addiction, and some who join in, with bottle or can in hand. Saying nothing negative about the addiction and dangers of alcoholism is advocating its existence and therefore its consumption.

But didn’t Jesus partake of alcohol when he walked the planet? The Bible says He associated with people who were “winebibbers,” but it never says He specifically imbibed. Many have assumed because he drank “the fruit of the vine” at the Last Supper that He must have had fermented wine and not new wine. And an age-old debate argues the question – “What was the alcoholic content of the wine in biblical times?” Jennifer Jordan, senior editor at [The Wine of Israel and Wine in Biblical Times \(savoreachglass.com\)](#) has written an unbiased article concerning this very subject. In it she says,

If the wine was in fact wine and not grape juice, then it obviously had some sort of alcohol content. However, the wine of the Biblical era was much weaker than the wine we know today. While one reason for this was the addition of water, another reason was naturally fermented wine (wine that does not have additives) was the only wine available during this time. Because sugar and yeast were not yet added to wine, its alcohol content remained lower than modern day spirits.

See her full article at [The Wine of Israel and Wine in Biblical Times \(streetdirectory.com\)](#).

An additional article confirms Ms. Jordan’s research, conclusions and explain the natural fermentation process:

<http://www.herebeanswers.com/2009/11/white-powdery-coating-on-grapes.html>

I am concerned that today’s believers, wave their banner of spiritual freedom, and say, “It’s okay to drink because Paul told Timothy to “use a little wine for *his* stomach’s sake and *his* frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23). They mistranslate the context of the passage and overlook our greater responsibility to be holy men and women of God. We are expected to live a life of purity and daily cross-bearing (Matt. 16:24). People who are weak and lost are looking for committed followers who will not bow to the world; those

who refuse to defile themselves with the world's delicacies and the wine which the world drinks (Daniel 1:8).

To refrain from beating a dead horse, I will end as I started.

- First, does the Romans passage, and the research displayed by Jennifer Jordan and others, advocate today's fermented and distilled liquors? No.
- Second, are there acceptably effective medicinal equals to the wine of Paul's time? Absolutely. Ask any pharmacist!
- Third, was the alcoholic content of the wine of biblical times comparable to today? No, it is tantamount to comparing "whiskey to water." Today's alcoholic drinks are just varying degrees of an addictive drug; they render the user a slave to its intoxicating power.

How can we as Bible-believers and God-followers promote such a dangerous and addictive product? We must draw a line in the sand, place alcohol on the other side of the line, and stand clearly in opposition to its seductive enticement. "Who has anguish? Who has grief? Who has conflict? Who constantly grumbles? Who has wounds for no apparent reason? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who hang around wine too much; those who keep searching for intoxicating drinks." (Proverbs 23:29-30)

Check out the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at: <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>

Our Lord is seeking holy men and women who are not conformed (fashioned like) the world but are transformed by the renovation of their thinking (Romans 12:1,2).