

## What Does The Bible Say About Drinking?

The following are just a few Scriptures and commentaries from the New King James Version of The MacArthur Study Bible which concern the subject of drinking.

**Proverbs 20:1** - *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”* Wine was grape juice mixed with water to dilute it, but strong drink was unmixed. While the use of these beverages is not specifically condemned, being intoxicated always is. Rulers were not to drink, so their judgment would not be clouded nor their behavior less than exemplary. **31:4-5** - *“... it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.”* Intoxicating drinks can weaken reason and judgment, loosen convictions, or pervert the heart. They do not suit rulers who need clear, steady minds and keen judgment. **23:20,21** - *“Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.”* **23:29-30** - *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine.”* Linger long at the wine and searching for more to drink are indicative of constant drinking, so as to induce drunkenness. **23:31** - *“Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly.”* This describes wine when it is especially desirable and when it is most intoxicating, perhaps as ‘strong drink’ or mixed with spices only and not water, as opposed to the ‘new wine’, which was fresh and unfermented or less fermented. **23:32** - *“At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.”* This recounts the hangover, but also the more than likely destructive consequences. **23:33** - *“Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things.”* The delirium and distortion of reality are part of the drunkard’s miserable experience. Also see **23:34-35** where here is the warning about the dizziness, sickness, and confusion of the drunkard. **31:6-7** - *“Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.”* Such extreme situations, possibly relating to a criminal on death row or someone agonizing in pain with a terminal illness or tragic circumstance, are in utter contrast to that of the king.

**1 Timothy 5:23** - *“No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.”* ‘Water’ in the ancient world was often polluted and carried many diseases. Therefore Paul urged Timothy not to risk illness, not even for the sake of a commitment to abstinence from wine. Paul wanted Timothy to use wine which, because of fermentation, acted as a disinfectant to protect his health problems due to the harmful effects of impure water.

**Romans 14:21** - *“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.”* To make someone stumble is a stumbling block - anything a believer does - even though Scripture may permit it - that causes another person to fall into sin.

**Ephesians 5:17,18** - *“... do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, ... .”* Scripture consistently condemns all drunkenness.

Also see **Deuteronomy 14:26, Psalm 104:14-15, Isaiah 5:11-12 & 28:7-8.**