

Christian Ethics

The ethics of the recreational use of
alcohol and drugs

A few observations by way of introduction

- The Bible says nothing about “recreational” drugs: there is no marijuana or heroin in it
- The sorcerer (“pharmacist”) in NT Greek was one who used medicine and potions to bring about spiritual ends.
- In Greek culture, the “Pharmacist” was either the human embodiment of evil—the one deemed such was then offered as a sacrifice

- Then it came to describe the person who used poison and drugs to bring about healing and death.
- The Bible does not condemn alcoholic beverages as inherently sinful.
- When Jesus turned water into wine (John 2.1-11), everything about the story insists that we see wine (as opposed to grape juice)
- The ruler of the feast did not say, “This is good, but it’s not wine. What is it?”
- To which Jesus could have explicitly condemned any alcoholic beverage
- We MUST let Bible texts talk for themselves.

- The word “wine” is never used in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper: Matthew 26.29, Mark 14.25, Luke 22.18 all call it “Fruit of the Vine”
- This is, I think, a theological distinction. Just as the Passover was without leaven, so was the cup
- Wine, as such, was not condemned in the Scriptures, but it was not used in communion

- 1Timothy 5:23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.
- This verse eliminates the inherent sinfulness of wine. For instance, Paul would never have advised “do a little shoplifting to ease thy poverty,” since stealing is intrinsically wrong.
- But it also handcuffs the “beverage use of alcohol is a virtue” crowd, because the context of Paul’s instruction is clearly built upon the fact that Timothy didn’t imbibe

So what's the ethical dilemma?

Purpose

- The use of alcohol is clearly sinful, if the purpose is drunkenness. This would certainly include recreational drugs
- Eph 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
- Excess is “riot” Titus 1.6, I Peter 4.4
- It describes brashness, rashness, flashiness, loudness, and tawdriness

- It is clearly sinful, if the purpose is to get someone else drunk, to take advantage of them
- Genesis 19.32-35
- Hab 2:15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

And it is always dangerous

- It is dangerous because of its addictiveness
- Solomon knew this: Proverbs 23.29-35
- Paul warns us about becoming enslaved. I Corinthians 6.12