

Divide-The-Truth Sunday School Preview Notes
Proverbs 20:1, 23:19-21, 23:29-30, 23:31-35, 31:4-5, 31:6-7
Explore the Bible Sunday School Lesson for February 8, 2004

Introduction: We continue with selected Proverbs dealing with very practical issues that we face. Today's lesson and next week's lesson are about two issues that are terribly neglected in the pulpits across America, yet the subject matter must be addressed if we are to be Biblically informed and challenged to live lives righteously before our Lord and Master. Today's lesson will discuss the use, or should I say the misuse, of alcohol.

We have done a very poor job of communicating this message in our churches. According to recent statistics, almost 50% of all Southern Baptists drink alcohol. This rate is much higher in other religious groups and drastically higher in those who do not attend church of any kind.

Our neglect of God's Word is bad enough, but we also have neglected statistics that should alarm us into action:

- Youth who drink are 7 ½ times more likely to experiment with other drugs.
- Approximately 18,000 people die from alcohol related automobile accidents. Recent statistics reveal that this number has been on the rise in the last two years. As I prepare for this lesson on New Year's Eve, it is estimated that over 100 people will die tonight in an automobile accident involving alcohol. In addition to these deaths, it is estimated that over one million individuals are injured in automobile accidents as a result of alcohol. Having worked in trauma and emergency medicine most of my years as a nurse, I am confident that this figure is below the actual number.

Though this lesson is a lesson from Proverbs, I will use many references to reveal that God's Word is not silent on the issue of drinking and to reveal that God's Word is loud and clear that total abstinence is God's solution to such a serious problem. I would also like to take this time to give credit for much of the work of this lesson to my pastor, Bro. Jonathan Sims. Transcripts and tapes for the message are available upon request through our church office (931-684-3625) or by e-mailing me at Divide-The-Truth@juno.com. There will be far more material than you can possibly teach in one hour but my hopes are that for those who are wavering on this issue because of doubts, God's Word will provide all the answers and clear all doubts. Second, I anticipate that this lesson may lead to many questions being asked which the regular lesson plan does not answer. I want you to have the answers to the questions before the questions arise.

20:1 We have been through half of the entire Bible and three fourths of the Old Testament when we come to this verse, and yet this is the first verse in the Bible that gives a specific warning regarding the dangers of alcohol. This is not the first reference to alcohol, but the first warning about it. However, every previous reference to it has been negative, the first being in Genesis 9:20-27.

Proverbs was and still is a book for its times. Throughout its pages it rebukes the vices and follies of every class of people, whether they lived thousands of years ago or are living in our world today. Covetousness, anger, dishonesty, and sexual purity are repeatedly brought to our attention and we are constantly being warned against them. Now we come to drunkenness. While I do not know why Solomon did not write sooner on this issue, I do believe that if he were alive today and walked into the grocery store or discount store and down the sidewalk of our cities, he would be utterly appalled by the availability of wine, beer, and liquor. We are overwhelmed with advertisements on TV, billboards, magazines, and newspapers. This vice would have immediately knocked him down like a freight train striking a car and would have caused him to write sooner. The only reason that I can account for Solomon not writing sooner or writing more about this sin is that though it existed in ancient times, it could bear no comparison with our experience.

There is much confusion about the word "wine." "Wine" is mentioned nearly 150 times in the Old Testament. Hebrew people considered it a gift from God, along with oil and bread (Psalm 104:15). To get

a clearer understanding of this word, you have to go back to the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek. There are three exact parallel words used in both Old and New Testaments.

- 1) The word “*strong drink*” which is used here and in Proverbs 31:6 and once in the New Testament (Luke 1:15) speak of alcoholic beverages that have an extremely high alcohol content. The Hebrew word is “*shekar*” and the Greek parallel word is “*sikera*.” We would call this liquor which would include drinks like whisky (43%), vodka (40%), rum (40%), tequila (40%), gin (40%), bourbon (43%) scotch (40%) and Everclear (95%). You could run your car off of Everclear! While Proverbs 31:6 seems to indicate that strong drink is permissible as a narcotic for the one who is dying, Dr. Warren Wiersbe believes that these verses were spoken in irony and not for a command. While alcohol has served as a valuable drug for medical purposes in the past, its use beyond that becomes dangerous. Besides, in today’s modern era of medical achievements there are other drugs that we use instead of alcohol: codeine for cough, magnesium sulfate to stop premature labor, and medication like morphine for severe pain and discomfort of the dying. The irony of this is that millions are dying because of strong drink.
- 2) The second word is “*wine*.” There are actually two Hebrew words for wine and two Greek words for wine. The first Hebrew word for “*wine*” is “*tiros*h,” and its Greek parallel is “*gleukos*.” If you look at the Greek word closely you see a common English word used in the medical profession, glucose, which speaks of the sugar content. In the medical profession we would often start IV’s with 5% glucose. This was most often called sweet wine or freshly squeezed juice. Sometimes it was fermented. Most times it was nothing more than grape juice like we buy in the store, only thicker like orange juice with pulp. This word could also refer to a cluster of grapes (Isaiah 65:8). Thus the word “*wine*” likely referred to non-alcoholic juice.
- 3) The second word for wine found in the Bible is the Hebrew word “*yayin*” and the Greek parallel “*oinos*.” These are the most common words found in both Testaments to describe wine. The words generally mean to bring to a boil or boiling. My grandmother used to make lots of jelly. To make jelly she would bring to a boil the grapes, apples, peaches, blackberries, or whatever fruit she was using. By boiling and adding more sugar the fruit would become very thick and then was placed into jars and sealed. This allowed the storage of the fruit that would normally spoil quickly to last for longer periods of time. In Biblical times the same process was carried out to make a thick paste or jam-like substance for storage. This would prevent spoilage and fermentation. The paste would later be used like we use jam or it could be reconstituted by adding water. The only way this beverage would be alcoholic would be if leaven were added. If leaven were added the maximum alcohol content could only reach 11%. To achieve anything greater than 11% a distilling process of already fermented wine must take place. The strongest wine in Biblical days, therefore, could only be about 11% but it was then mixed with water to make one part wine and three parts water thus reducing the alcohol content to about 2 to 2¾ %. Today, anything below 3.2% is not designated an alcoholic beverage. Thus, we see wine of biblical times did not even qualify as an alcoholic drink in our times.

“Any accurate Jewish source will point out that yayin, mixed wine, or *oinos* does not refer only to intoxicating liquor made by fermentation, but more often refers to a thick non-intoxicating syrup or jam produced by boiling to make it storable.” – John MacArthur

No matter what we have learned in our word study above the clear reading of this verse points to the effects of wine or strong drink on the individual. “*Wine is a mocker*.” The word “*mocker*” is believed to have come from a root, which means to “to make mouths at, i.e., to scoff.” Thus it means to deride or to scorn. Next the text tells us that “*strong drink is a brawler*.” The word “*brawler*” is translated “*raging*” in the KJV. Both words speak of loud clamorous noises like the growling of a bear or the snarling of a dog.

If you have ever been around someone who is intoxicated you fully understand these descriptions. The excessive use of intoxicants excites the drinker to boisterous behavior and aggressive and belligerent attitudes. The person is out of control because he is controlled by something else. The only possible evaluation is he *“is led astray by it and is not wise.”*

“The expressions in Scripture which commend wine and strong drink are less applicable to the liquors in ordinary use among us, and the expressions which denounce them, more.” – William Arnot

23:19-21 Beginning in chapter twenty-three, we see perhaps the most vivid description of the tragic consequences of drunkenness. We cannot help but noticing the phrase *“my son”* (Proverbs 23:15, 19, 26) here and in many other places in the book of Proverbs. Solomon repeated these words many times possibly over the rejection and ruin of his own son Rehoboam. It was a cry echoed from the past by his father King David over his son Absalom. For all the success we see in King David’s life, including his son Solomon who inherited the throne, David was a poor father to his other sons.

A good father sees a danger long before his son or daughter comes to it and warns him sternly and repeatedly. The sadness of our day is that fathers and mothers are not doing this. They themselves have failed to learn from the past and are often times dependent upon others (school, church, and blind luck) to teach their children right from wrong. While the church certainly has its part to play and the school may or may not contribute to moral teaching, the primary responsibility lies in the home, especially on the father.

Here the father desires to see his son guided *“in the way.”* As we have seen many times elsewhere, it means one’s manner of life. The word “guide” means to go straight and to be successful. Therefore, the desire of the father is that his son would lead a life that would be prosperous and successful. This is in comparison to a life that will be led astray if one associates with those who are drunkards and gluttons. That way of life will lead to poverty. I wonder how many people have lost their jobs because of drinking. Or have lost a house or a car. How many marriages have been destroyed? How many children have lost a father, not to death, but to the father’s love of the drink? The one who drinks thinks more of his beverage than of his family. How many have lost their lives?

23:29-30 Six questions are now asked to be answered in the verses to follow. The purpose of the questions is to focus our attention to the vivid description of the drunkard. Verse twenty-nine is the riddle and verse thirty is the answer.

23:31-35 The father does more than merely counsel the youth not to drink to excess; the father specifically tells the son to turn his eyes away from the cup, for in looking one becomes charmed by it. It is a charm that has a sting at its tail. The consequences are described in verses thirty-two to thirty-five. As we can, see the writer gives a vivid picture of the one who drinks too much: he raves on and on (v.29), picks fights and quarrels (v.29), poisons his system with alcohol (v.32), gets bloodshot eyes (v.29), loses control (v.34b), is sick to his stomach (v.34a), is confused (v.35), is unable to speak clearly (v.33b), imagines things (v.33a), and physically feels beaten (v.35). The conclusion is in the drunk’s own words (v.35).

One would think that after the drunkard awoke from his stupor and began to sober up, feeling the pain of a body wrecked by the drink the night before, he would immediately resolve to never drink again, but as we see, quite the opposite occurs. The *“mocker”* and the *“brawler”* have captured him.

Note: In verse thirty-three in the KJV you will notice that it states *“Thine eyes shall behold strange women”* instead of *“strange things.”* While it is true that the drunkard hallucinates *“strange things,”* it is equally true that there is a direct link between drinking and sexual immorality. A drunken man is easy prey for the harlot and the drunken woman is easy prey for the lustful man.

31:4-5 These verses come from the words of King Lemuel. While there is no conclusive evidence, most Bible scholars seem to agree that this was King Solomon. There was no King Lemuel in either Judah or Israel, nor are there any records of a King Lemuel among surrounding nations. The name only occurs in this chapter. The word means “Unto God” or “With God.” Possibly this was a nickname used by Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba. While most of our thoughts focus on the sexual immorality of Bathsheba, it

appears that later in life she was a very faithful wife to King David and a dedicated mother to Solomon. Thus, we have a mother giving instruction to her son (vv.2-3).

It is bad enough for an ordinary person to get drunk and make a fool of himself, but it is even worse when it is a person in authority. The king was the upholder of law in a nation. In biblical times he was the one who gave final verdict in many cases. He executed power, judicial and legislative. His decisions were final. Alcohol causes one to lose one sense of allegiance and dedication to the things that are important. A drunkard's first love is the drink, not his wife or his children. The same is true regarding one in leadership. His first love will not be for those he serves and protects but to the bottle. His decisions will be distracted. His decisions will be contrary to the very laws that he is meant to enforce.

Ecclesiastes 10:16-17 *Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child and your princes feast in the morning. Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes feast at the proper time- For strength and not drunkenness!*

Isaiah 5:22 *Woe to men mighty as drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man.*

31:6-7 See notes on page one.

Having completed our studies on drinking, I would like to offer some additional information against the argument for drinking in moderation. It is very likely that these scripture references will be brought up in your teaching time.

First Argument.

1. Jesus turned the water into wine (John 2:5-10). The word for "wine" is the Greek word "oinos" which we have previously discussed. What does verse seven state? *"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."* In view of all who knew what was going on, Jesus demonstrated that the "wine" He was making was not intoxicating; it was well diluted with water! In addition, this was a religious service, and everything that had to do with leaven was forbidden at such services. Our Lord was reluctant to even perform this miracle so early in His ministry (v.4), but He did so out of love and compassion for his mother. It is inconceivable that Jesus would give to men that which could lead them into drunkenness and sin or that he would break the Jewish laws of his day!

Point: To use what Jesus made which was non-alcoholic...to justify drinking a drink with an alcohol content of 20% or better is the height of error.

Second Argument

2. Paul told Timothy to drink wine: *"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."* (1 Tim 5:23)

Once again the word for wine is "oinos" which was no alcohol to mildly alcoholic in content. Here again we must look at the context. Paul was telling Timothy to "Drink no longer water." Why? Because Timothy had a "stomach" problem. While in Africa this past year, most of our team had mild to moderate gastroenteritis. Our stomachs and guts were being attacked by water that was not impure, just different. Impure water here and especially in third world countries causes much sickness and death. It was no different in New Testament days. In fact it was probably worse. Thus Paul instructed him to dilute wine into the water to kill the bacteria and thus help heal his "often infirmities." He tells Timothy this in light of his previous discussion about the qualification of elders and deacons. Timothy was only doing what Paul had instructed him to do with no regard for his physical health. He was staying completely away from anything that might bring reproach on the Lord's name and the office of elder (pastor).

Point: With modern purification systems of the day...alcohol as a necessity is erased. Today, alcohol serves no good purpose! This is not permission to drink alcohol!

Third Argument

3. Proverbs says to give a man wine: *"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts."* (Prov 31:6). I refer you to our previous discussion.

Fourth Argument

4. The Lord used wine in the Lord's Supper: This is the easiest of arguments to put down simply because that is not what Jesus said or did. We not only have one reference, but three references to our Lord's words in Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18. In all three scripture references the words *"fruit of the vine"* are used, not the word *"wine."* Not one legitimate translation (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV, or the HCS currently used in your Sunday School literature) translates *"fruit of the vine"* as wine, not even the version used by the Catholic Church. The only places I found wine substituted *"fruit of the vine"* were in The Contemporary English Version and The Living Bible which are poor sources for study because they are paraphrased versions not translations.

Many times Jesus merely referred to it by the word *"cup"* (Matt.26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:17, 1 Cor.11:25).

In addition to the notes above, leaven was forbidden, as it was at religious services (argument one) in the Passover. Only *"unleavened bread"* (Matt.26:17) was allowed. Leaven was not allowed because leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible: *"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"* (1 Corinthians 5:6) And the leaven was to be *"purged"* or cast out signifying that the blood of the Lamb removes our sin. Christ Himself is pictured as being absent of leaven: *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:"* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

The only way to make wine is with leaven, what we call yeast! In the Lord's Supper the juice represents the blood of Jesus which is *"the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"* (1 Peter 1:19). Since leaven represents sin, if Jesus used wine in the Lord's Supper...it would indicate that His blood was not sinless. There is no way Jesus would use something that would call His sinless blood into question. Jesus never used wine in the Lord's Supper.

Fifth Argument

5. Ephesians permits drinking in moderation because it states, *"be not drunk with wine wherein is excess."* This is the verse I have most often heard used by those who say drinking in moderation is not condemned in the Bible. This is because they understand the word *"excess"* to mean quantity. They mistakenly have interpreted the word to mean that they can drink as long as they do not get drunk. However, this is not what the original language communicates!

The word *"excess"* is the Greek word *"asotia."* The Greek word *"sozo"* which means, "to save" comes from this word. However, the negative prefix *"a"* gives the meaning "unsaved." W.E Vines says there is "no saving quality about it." Additionally, the word *"excess"* is translated by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal as *"riotous living"* (Luke 15:13). I encourage you to also look at Titus 1:6 and 1 Peter 4:4. Thus, we see that the word *"excess"* does not mean quantity but rather quality. It means to give forth the appearance that you are unsaved. Obviously, when a man is drunk his appearance gives forth the witness that he is unsaved.

The word *"drunk"* is the Greek word *"methusko"* which means "to make drunk or to grow drunk. It is an inceptive verb according to W.E.Vines, which means to begin the process of drunkenness. When does the process of becoming drunk take place? When you drink the first sip of alcohol! That begins the process.

Putting these two words together, here is a good interpretation of Eph.5:18, "do not begin the process of becoming drunk for that gives forth the appearance of being unsaved." And it does!

Point: Drinking alcohol in any quantity gives forth the image and appearance of unsaved living!

Closing: Most of the wine mentioned in the Bible was non-alcoholic to mildly alcoholic in that it was diluted with water. Strong drink was permissible only in the time of death as a pain reliever. The wine of today is defined by the term “*strong drink*” and is forbidden by Scripture. The mildest alcoholic beverages of today would be considered “*strong drink*” by Bible definition.

Point: Total abstinence is the Bible way! It...

- Protects our witness
- Helps to keep our children from experimentation with alcohol
- Keeps us from offending or leading weak believers astray (see Rom.14:21)
- Eliminates the possibility of us “***being deceived***” by this mocker (Prov.20:1)

I Corinthians 6:10 *"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."*

To God be the Glory!

Divide-The-Truth Sunday School Preview Notes are offered by request through e-mail only at Divide-The-Truth@juno.com. The purpose of these notes is not to replace your materials but to add to your current materials so that you might “rightly divide the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15). A full doctrinal statement and references are available upon request.