“Should My Husband Get Baptized If He Still Wants to Get Drunk?”

My husband is now a newly born again believer and wants to get baptized. My concern is that even though he has asked Jesus to be his savior and wants to get baptized, he won’t give up getting drunk. He says it is his “one thing” he isn’t ready to give up. Should he still get baptized?

I’m so glad you wrote! What’s your understanding of what it means to be baptized? It is an outward symbol of an inward reality: that he has trusted in Christ, is now a member of His family, and wants to testify that a very important change has happened inside.

It doesn’t mean he has his act together. <smile>

You can read all the way through the New Testament and not find any specifications for being baptized other than deciding to follow Christ, and no reasons *not* to be baptized. As your husband walks with the Lord and starts to realize that the abundant life starts with Jesus living inside him, He will provide a different way of viewing getting drunk. But that’s going to take time, and I want to encourage you, one wife to another, to let the Lord be in charge of the timing of that dealing with that behavior. There are reasons he gets drunk that God is fully aware of, and will deal with at the right time.

Please, give your husband a break. . . and a baptism party! Celebrate this great, great news. . . and let the Holy Spirit be the Holy Spirit. He knows all about your husband’s drinking. You pray, and trust God.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

* * *

After reading this article on our website, this wise wife wrote to me:

Twenty-six years ago, my husband and I started going to a local church sometimes. God had been calling us to Him for some time, and at that point I fully committed my life to Him. My husband was born again when a man from church took the time to befriend my husband and explain the gospel to him. My husband continued drinking (I didn't only because I was pregnant).

I didn't say anything to him, but he later told me that he started hiding from me how much he was drinking because he was feeling guilty. One day our pastor stopped by with his family when they were out for a bike ride, and my husband offered him a beer! I was mortified; I didn't know much about being a Christian, but I did know that it wasn't socially acceptable to offer a pastor a beer!

Thank God for that pastor, though, and the people of that church who welcomed us and took a genuine interest in us. The pastor graciously declined with "no thanks" but continued visiting and didn't make my husband feel like a leper or give him a lecture. Not too long after that, an elder of the church encouraged us to start coming to Sunday School Bible study classes instead of just worship services. Because my husband felt comfortable with the pastor, he talked to him about this. He told our pastor, "I want to come to church more often, but I like drinking beer and don't want to stop, and I don't want people to judge me." The pastor told him, "Whether or not you should be drinking beer is between you and God, and no one at church is going to say anything to you about it. Don't let that thought keep you from coming to church or growing closer to God."

So we started going to Bible studies and became more involved

in the church. Within a few months, just after our son was born, my husband quit drinking. It happened this way: My husband later told me that he had been feeling the conviction that he shouldn't be drinking and he knew that he didn't want his son to grow up like he had, with an alcoholic father. But he liked beer so much that he kept ignoring the thoughts. One day when my husband was in the garage, he felt that conviction so strongly that he knelt down on the floor there in the garage and surrendered himself completely to God, and vowed not to drink again. He quit that very day, and God helped him keep that vow. He came into the house to find me, very emotional, and told me what had happened.

I can't take credit for being wise enough not to say anything to him about drinking; that had to be the Lord's work. But I do think that because I didn't say anything to him about it, the struggle stayed between my husband and God and didn't become a power struggle between him and me. I know enough now to know that a wife should not attempt to be her husband's conscience on matters such as this; God calls her to love and honor her husband.

God does not always use the same timeline or the same routes with everyone, and not everyone is equally responsive to God. But that woman can be sure that God IS working with her husband, just as He is working with her, and that His Spirit is dealing with anything He wants her husband to change. She can trust God enough to leave the conviction to Him, and to guide her in what her responses should be in difficult decisions (such as if he wants her to drink with him) and how to honor her husband without compromising her beliefs. I will pray for this woman and pray that her husband will respond to the Lord and fully commit him life to Him.

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“Jesus Contributed to Drunkenness!”

I know drunkenness is condemned in Scripture, yet it seems that Jesus contributed to the drunkeness at the wedding feast when he turned the water to wine.

I’m afraid we can’t agree with your conclusions. First of all, Scripture doesn’t say anything about drunkenness occurring at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). Secondly, to blame the Lord Jesus for drunkenness by changing water into wine is like blaming God for the Great Chicago Fire because He created wood with the capacity to burn. No one is responsible for drunkenness except the person who chooses to overdrink. I think it’s important to draw a distinction between the fact that God created good things in the first place, and the possibility that those good things can be abused. He is never responsible for our sinful choices.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Should A Christian Think About Alcohol?”

There are people who I am close to that believe having an occasional drink (keeping in mind that they aren’t drinking to get drunk) is okay.

Personally, in the short amount of time I've been alive, I have seen nothing but bad things produced from drinking alcohol (whether the purpose is to get drunk or not). Which is why I have made the decision to stay away from it. My fiance has a different opinion. I know I can't push my convictions on others, but if we are to "become one" (which is what God has communicated to us both) then how is it possible for one of us to drink (just a little) and the other not drink?

Throughout the Bible it talks about wine; Jesus drank wine. How is the wine from back then different from now (if it is different)? Is it okay to drink alcohol upon occasion (New Year's, weddings, celebrations)? What do you believe about people that are called into the ministry that drink (on occasion)? I would appreciate any advice or references that you could send my way.

Let me give you some thoughts which hopefully are an accurate assessment of the question from the Bible's point of view.

First of all, the Bible never indicates that drinking wine (as well as other liquids with alcoholic content) is a sin. You have mentioned the fact that Jesus drank wine. In fact, He was accused by His enemies of being a "wine-bibber," or wine-drinker; that is, He was habitually observed doing this. Jesus admits that He has. When He compares His ministry lifestyle with that of John the Baptist's He says, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-drinker, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!'" (Matthew 11:18,19).

We actually have an account in John 2 where John describes the wedding at Cana (which Jesus and the disciples attended) and lays out in detail the fact that the hosts had run out of wine. You know the story. At His mother's request for Him to help, Jesus ordered the servants to fill up seven huge clay pots with water, which He turned into wine.

Was this grape juice, or wine? The context tells us which. After this newly-created wine was served, the headwaiter came to the bridegroom and complimented him: “Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; but you have kept the good wine until now!” (John 2:10). Every bartender knows instantly what this man is saying: “Serve the good wine first, and then, when people have become affected by it, and their taste has been dulled, serve them the cheap, inferior wine.”

Another instance which lets us know that these ancient wines contained alcohol is confirmed from the lips of Peter on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has just fallen upon the believers and they were empowered miraculously to speak in other languages. Since there were Jews present from all over the Mediterranean world (cf. Acts 2:9-11) all of these different people who spoke different languages heard the gospel spoken in their own tongue. They are amazed at this and some of those present suggest that these Christians are drunk (2:13). But Peter comes to their rescue and says, “Men of Judea,. . .let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For these men are **not drunk** as you suppose, for it is **only the third hour of the day**!” The Jewish day begins at 6:00 A.M., so it is only 9:00 in the morning and Peter is reminding them that it was too early for them, or any other men, to be drunk yet.

Fermentation is also implied in our Lord’s discussion about not pouring new wine into an old wineskin (Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37). The process is as follows: You kill a sheep or a goat. You take the skin of say, the hind leg. You tie the bottom tightly so it won’t leak, and you have a nice flask. The skin is new and pliable, a “green skin.” You bring freshly crushed grape juice from the winepress, and pour it into your wineskin. Then you tie the top. Inside, the grape juice ferments and becomes wine. Since the skin is pliable, it expands and the pressure builds up inside. Then it is hung up

in a cool place, a cellar, just as wine is attended to today, and two or three years later, you drink it. During that storage time, the skin, in its expanded state hardens, and becomes rigid.

Jesus' point is that you would never take this old wine skin after you have drunk all the wine in it and recycle the wineskin with more new wine. The fermentation process would burst it. The application Jesus is making alludes to the fact that what He is proclaiming, the New Covenant, cannot be contained in the old "wineskin" of the Jewish Law system. The book of Hebrews personifies this same vivid contrast between the Old Mosaic Law system and its replacement with the Gospel of Grace found in Christ Jesus.

I hope with the above, we have proven our point that the wine in the days of Jesus did the same thing to those who drank it as it does to those who drink too much wine today.

Some Christians who do not wish to believe that there is any alcoholic beverage mentioned in the Bible and seek an alternative have suggested that "new wine" (*gleukos)* actually means "grape juice." However, this is the exact word used in Acts 2:13 associated with their accusation of "drunkeness."

On the other hand, while drinking wine is not a sin in the Bible, getting drunk definitely *is*. There is an extended passage in the Proverbs warning people about the danger of wine:

> *Who has woe? Who has sorrow?*
> *Who has contentions? Who has complaining?*
> *Who has wounds without cause?*
> *Who has redness of eyes?*
> *Those who linger long over wine,*
> *Those who go to taste mixed wine.*
> *Do not look on the wine when it is red,*
> *When it sparkles in the cup,*

When it goes down smoothly;
At the last it bites like a serpent,
And stings like a viper.
Your eyes will see strange things,
And your mind will utter perverse things.
And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea,
Or like the one who lies down on the top of a mast.
They struck me, but I did not become ill;
They beat me, but I did not know it.
When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink. (Proverbs 23:39-35)

Drunkenness is mentioned many times in both Old and New Testaments in a negative light. Get a concordance and look under "drink" and "drunk." You'll see what I mean. Drunkenness is also included in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. It is also mentioned by Paul in the context of Christian leadership in the Church. One of the qualifications for elders is "not *addicted to wine*" (1 Timothy 3:3). This is repeated in Titus 1:7. I take it that there is a distinction between drinking in moderation and addiction. I don't think Jesus was addicted to wine, do you? But He drank wine. And here is where it gets "fuzzy." When do you pass the point when you qualify as either drunk or addicted? I think the question that needs to be continually asked if one drinks is **"Do I have it, or does it have me?"** And there is a danger here, as we saw in the Proverbs passage above. We could ask the same question about money, or television, or food, or travel, or sports, or exercise, and on and on. The Bible seems to call for *moderation*, for an awareness that things can *gain control* over us which will be detrimental to our life, our family, our ministry.

Most of us would like for the world to be black and white. Clear-cut. No gray. But gray is a biblical color. All of these things I have mentioned above fall not in a "yes/no" pattern,

but a “maybe/maybe not” pattern. We could place these into an area we might call “doubtful things.” The signature passage on this is Romans 14. And I think this passage speaks directly to the communication you have described you are having with your fiancé. Let’s look at some verses:

“Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge another man’s servant?” (14:1-4)

Use the word “wine” or “alcoholic beverage” and “drink” and re-read the passage. Both parties have a responsibility. The one who “eats” is not to look on the other with *contempt*. The one who does not “eat” is not to *judge* the one who does. God is able to bless both people though they do different things.

“One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. *Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind*“(v.5). It is okay to hold different positions on some of these things, and neither should judge the other.

But Paul brings in another factor: “Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this—that no one is to put an *obstacle* or a *stumbling block* in a brother’s way. 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*” (13,14).

“For if because of food (or drink) 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. . . So then let us pursue the

things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food (or drink). All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats (drinks) and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to *drink wine*, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats (drinks), because his eating (drinking) is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin. . . .Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just *please ourselves.* Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself" (14:15-15:3).

What we have in this wonderful passage gives both freedom and restraint. God has provided many wonderful things for the human race, including wine "to make glad the heart of man" (Psalm 104:15). Yet we have additional responsibilities to behave in such a way that we might not offend another's conscience. There is what we might call the "Law of Love" which would make us careful not to exercise our freedom at the expense of someone else's expectation of us. A second law might be called the "Law of Expediency." Paul says, "All things are *lawful*, but not all things are *expedient* (I Corinthians 6:12)" In other words, if I have freedom to have a glass of wine, I still have to look to the leading of the Holy Spirit to help me decide whether it would be expedient in a particular context for me to exercise my freedom.

So _____, I would suggest that you and your fiancé get together and look at this material and have a good discussion about it. I would not make this issue the pivot upon which your shared life together will turn. If he wants a glass of wine at a meal at home, you do not have to have one too, but you also should not judge him for having one. If it becomes something habitual, and seems to be gaining greater control, I

think you have a right to talk to him about it and express your concern. “Becoming one” in a marriage is not something based upon both people thinking the same things or doing the same things. It is about being open to one another and sharing your lives. It is possible for him to have a glass of wine and you deciding not to.

The word “becoming” is most important. It is a process. It takes many years for a couple to become one. Couples who have “pulled in the harness” for thirty or forty years together are the ones who best exhibit this “oneness,” since they know each other so well, and have fought their “fights,” and made their adjustments to each other, and there is a harmony between them that has been hammered out over their married life.

You are just embarking on that great journey called marriage. Realize that you both bring what you are to the relationship. You will discover that you are very different people Sometimes those differences will bring friction. You will rub on each other. This is part of the process of any meaningful relationship. Your differences should not be considered a threat, but rather a union which should be viewed as complementary, rather than competitive. Someone has said that marriage is like a tennis match. But it’s not singles; it’s doubles! You are both on the same side of the net giving all *you’ve* got—each of you, to make your relationship and your marriage a winner.

I hope this helps answer your question, _____.

Warm regards in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

See Also:
• “Is It OK for Christians to Drink in Moderation? Didn’t Jesus Drink?”
• “Jesus Contributed to Drunkenness!”