Disciples Church

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Alcohol According to the Bible**

**INTRO:**

Over the next weeks and months we are going to use Midweek Gathering to do some family business. We desire to teach on some topics that we have felt the need to for a while and then to spend a number of weeks looking at what membership at Disciples Church looks like.

Tonight is part one of two on the topic of Alcohol. What does the bible teach us about it and how should we engage it as Christ followers.

Your Elders understand that this is a culturally sensitive subject. Why is it so sensitive: Because like with many other things in this world you likely have been exposed to people or you yourself have sinfully abused it and caused a lot of hurt and damage to yourself or others.

Let me say up front that anytime we dig into a sensitive subject that people have real history with we can come to the scriptures or even the discussion very guarded and even resenting having to talk about it.

I pray that like with anything, we would come to God’s word hungry. Hungry to have him instruct us and grow us and mature us in truth and his ways. Ready to be challenged, to receive clarity, to go through healing and even repentance.

It is important that no topic God deems necessary to talk about in his word is off limits for us to study but instead we should be desire to study and rightly understand what his words tells us.

I know this topic for some of you is very sensitive but it doesn’t have to be. My prayer is that we seek God to grow, shape, embolden and even correct our understanding of this thing he has provided and given a purpose to so that we can rightly think about, talk about and steward it in a God glorifying way.

I want to do something we have done before when we climb into topics that have a wide variety of weight and conviction to help us plant ourselves firmly in God’s word and long to combat anything in us that might cause us to elevate our own personal opinion over what the Lord has spoken clearly about.

**Where do you learn what to think, say or do in any and every situation?**

Answer: From God’s word

**2 Tim. 3:16-17** "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"

**2 Cor. 10:4-5** "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”

**Prov. 3:5-6** Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
    and do not lean on your own understanding.  
**6**In all your ways acknowledge him,  
    and he will make straight your paths.

**2 Corinthians 10:5-6** We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

**Prov. 28:26** Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool,

but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.

**Is. 5:21** Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

The confession of 1689 says,

"The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved. " (The 1689 Confession, 1:10).

**How many supreme standards of judgment are there in the world?**

**Answer: Only one--God’s revealed will (or God’s law) as found in Scripture.**

Jesus Christ is Lord over every area of life. It's not what I believe or you believe that determines what you should think, say or do in a particular situation. It's not what you "feel" like you ought to do, nor is it even how you "feel" the Lord is leading you, apart from Scripture, that is to determine your actions. It is "what the Scriptures say" that is always to determine your convictions or actions in any matter.

**What about my conscience?**

**Isn't my conscience a standard for me to follow in matters like the use of alcoholic beverages?**

1. The conscience is a moral judge that either condemns or excuses your actions (Rom. 2:15).

2. However, since the fall of Adam, the conscience of man is not an infallible “standard” by which to determine our feelings and actions. The conscience condemns or excuses a man's actions based upon the ethical standard it is given. If the conscience is making judgments based upon the Word of God, it is reliable.

If the conscience is making judgments apart from or in contradiction to the full counsel of Scripture based upon one's feelings, the culture, one's environment, one's church background, or on any so-called expert, than the conscience is not reliable.

**The conscience is not autonomous or independent.** It is dependent upon an ethical standard. The only question is: **Whose ethical standard? Each person’s fallen and fallible standard or the standard of the perfect, infallible God?**

**The teachings of men or the Word of God?**

Your conscience, my conscience, all’s conscience must be submitted to the authority of God's Word.

3. In fact, the Scripture actually teaches you to distrust and or challenge your own understanding, your own thoughts, and your own ways:

" Be not wise in your own eyes;" (Prov. 3:7);

" Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool," (Prov. 28:26);

" your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray," (Is. 47:10);

" For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord." (Is. 55:8).

Rather than trusting in your own thoughts and your own ways, God calls you to "trust in the Lord with all your heart" (Prov. 3:5) for in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

**Three Positions Defined**

The Different Positions or Prescriptions regarding the consumption of Alcoholic Beverages

**Prohibition:** Alcohol is evil and all drinking is sin.

**Abstention**: Alcohol is not evil, and drinking is not sinful, yet it is right and wise and more loving for all Christians to refrain from using them.

M**oderation**: The Scripture commends the use of alcoholic beverages to all Christians if used moderately. Conscience and witness should influence how one exercises one’s freedom to partake or not.

**All three positions agree on the biblical teaching that:**

**Drunkenness is a Sin:**

The Bible clearly **prohibits over indulgence of alcohol (drunkenness)**.

To name just a few:

**Luke 21:34** “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.”

**Romans 13:13** Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

**Ephesians 5:18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit

The ramifications and detriment to life is serious when people get drunk. The bible is filled with examples and you likely have many of your own examples. Over indulgence or addiction to alcohol is sin and therefore is something not to be practiced so that we can honor God and protect our testimony in Christ.

If you struggle with drunkenness, if you struggle with addition to alcohol, if you are prone to abuse liberties like alcohol, know that we your leaders want to walk with you in your fight against what God calls sin. Know that Christ can give you victory over these struggles in the gospel and we are joyful to help you along the way.

What we will see like many good things God has given mankind is that the bible shows us examples of man abusing them in sin and using them rightly in God honoring moderation. Tonight, I want to spend the majority of our time looking at examples and teaching we receive in the Old and New Testament. Then next week I want to really dig into the application of what does this mean for us and how we should steward alcohol in a god Honoring way.

**Alcohol In the Old Testament:**

Let’s dig in and see the different context and applications for different references to wine and strong drink in the scriptures.

**-Yayin (wine):**

The same wine (yayin) that intoxicated Noah (Gen. 9:21), Lot (Gen. 19:32-35), Nabal (1 Sam. 25:36-37), and others (Is. 28:1,7) was given as a gift to others by godly men.

For example, Melchizedek, a type of Christ and the priest of the Most High God, gave yayin to Abraham

**Genesis 14:18**

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And he blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”

Yayin is commanded by God to be brought to Him as an offering in worship

(Ex. 29:38,40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:5,7,10).

**Exodus 29:38-40** “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. 39 One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. 40 And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering.

(3) Yayin is a gracious blessing from God that he instructs his people often to enjoy (Deut. 14:26; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7;).

**Deut. 14:26** and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household.

**Ps. 104:14-15** You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate,

that he may bring forth food from the earth 15 **and wine to gladden the heart of man**, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.

**Eccl. 9:7** Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

Yayin is one of the delicacies that Divine Wisdom prepares for all who seek her (Prov. 9:1-5).

Another word we see used in many scriptures is:

**-Tirosh (new wine)**

The same tirosh (new wine) that could enslave the heart when abused (Hos. 4:11) is a blessing from God (Gen. 27:28,37; Deut. 7:13; Prov. 3:10).

**Gen. 27:28** May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.

(1) The a quick note regarding: **âsîys (sweet wine)** is shown to intoxicate when abused (Is. 49:26; Joel 1:5) but it is also used as a sign of the Messianic blessings to come for God's people (Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13).

**- Shekar (strong drink)**

The same shekar (strong drink) that makes drunk (Prov. 20:1; Is. 5:11) is yet commanded to be offered as a drink offering to the Lord in worship (Num. 28:7), and as we saw is to be joyfully consumed as a part of the "rejoicing tithe" unto the Lord (Deut. 14:26).

**Num. 28:7** Its drink offering shall be a quarter of a hin for each lamb. In the Holy Place you shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the Lord.

**- Hamer (wine in the Chaldean language, from hamar which means to ferment)**

(1) The same hamer abused by Belshazzar (Dan. 5:1-4) is a blessing God gives to His people (Deut. 32:14). In Deuteronomy 32:14 hamer (fermented wine) parallels the phrase "the blood of the grapes" and yet it is this same hamer that has the capacity to intoxicate in Daniel 5:1-4.

**-Mesek (wine mixed with spices)**

(1) The same mesek that produces an intoxicating drink (Is. 5:22) is used for one part of the banquet which Divine Wisdom prepares for those who seek her (Prov. 9:2,5).

(2) Mesek describes the mingling of spices with wine (yayin) as in Proverbs 9:2,5 or the mingling of spices with strong drink (shekar) as in Isaiah 5:22.

**-Mishrah (the juice of grapes)**

(1) There is a word in the Hebrew language that means "the juice of grapes." The only time it is used in the Old Testament is in Numbers 6:3 where the Nazarite is not only forbidden from drinking yayin (wine) and shekar (strong drink), but is also prohibited from drinking mishrah (the juice of grapes).

(2) Those who would argue from silence that there was an unfermented yayin (wine) used in the Old Testament must produce an example to demonstrate that such is the case. Simply to make an assertion is no argument.

What we must see clearly when studying the use of alcohol in the OT is there are clear biblical references to establish the fact that they could intoxicate when abused. God gave a substance to be used to honor him and to enjoy that could be abused and intoxicate if abused but that doesn’t negate the fact that God still prescribed it for its different God honoring uses.

Church: We must let God define these words, we must not impose our own definition upon them (Scripture must interpret Scripture).

Before we leave the OT let’s take a moment to address the unique circumstances that God gave particular instruction for a particular people in a particular time.

**Old Covenant Prohibition**

The only circumstances under which alcoholic beverages were prohibited in the Old Testament were the following:

(1) While the priests ministered in the Tabernacle before the Lord they were to be careful that their judgment was not impaired with over indulgence so as not to incur the wrath of God as did Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:9).

(2) When kings sat in courts to rule as judges they were not to use anything that might dull their judgment in the use of God's law (Prov. 31:4,5).

(3) When one took a Nazarite vow he was to refrain from what was lawfully enjoyed by others (e.g. wine, strong drink, vinegar, the juice of grapes, grapes, or raisins) in order to demonstrate that he was consecrated to God (Num. 6:2-6). Those today who would use the Nazarite vow as a warrant to prohibit all alcoholic beverages must not stop with wine and strong drink, but must as well vow to refrain from consuming grape vinegar, the juice of grapes, grapes, and raisins (Num. 6:3). Moreover, they must not cut their hair (Num. 6:5), nor attend a funeral (Num. 6:6-7), not even the funeral of a close relative.

Finally, when the days of the vow are completed (note here that this vow was not normally a lifelong separation from the things mentioned above), they must bring the following offerings to the door of the tabernacle (Num. 6:13-20): a male lamb, a female lamb, a ram, unleavened bread, drink offerings, and their hair. In other words, to resurrect the Nazarite vow is to resurrect the ceremonial shadows of the Old Testament law (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1).

But again, note that when the vow was completed (Num. 6:20), it was not a sin to drink the same wine (yayin ) that one was forbidden to drink while under the Nazarite vow (Num.6:3). Thus, it is clear that the use of alcoholic beverages was not normally unlawful to God's people but for this particular office and time in the Old Covenant.

(4) The case of the Rechabites (Jer. 35:1-19) was a prophetic picture (like that of Hosea marrying a harlot) in which the Rechabite's refusal to drink wine, to build houses, to sow seed, and to plant vineyards indicated their willingness to obey the command of their father Jonadab (it was not God who prohibited these things to the Rechabites nor to any one else under normal circumstances) even though the command was strict. To the contrary, God's people, Judah, refused to obey God their Father. Furthermore, the Rechabite's vow not only involved abstaining from wine, but also other lawful activities such as building houses, sowing seed, and planting vineyards which likely indicated that a time of God's judgment was shortly to come in which the people of Judah would not drink wine, build houses, sow seed, nor plant vineyards in the land of Judah--they would be like the Rechabites.

It is obvious that just as it was not unlawful for God's people to build houses, to sow seed in a field, or to plant vineyards, so it was not unlawful for God's people to drink wine. Those today who would follow the pattern of the Rechabites in vowing to refrain from alcoholic beverages must also refuse to labor and live as they did in sowing seed, planting vineyard and living in houses, and rather vow to dwell in tents for this was the total prophetic picture that was presented to Judah (the living in a house and planting a garden would have violated their vow as much as drinking wine, cf. Jer. 35:8-10).

Moreover, the Rechabites did not condemn others for drinking wine (yayin), living in houses, or planting gardens, thus their example does not fit into the prohibitionist position where all use of alcoholic beverages is condemned by the prohibitionist.

**The symbolism of wine for blessing**

*As in all things in creation, wine itself is a symbol, a picture, a reflection of something bigger and greater. It is a picture of the blessings that come from a right relationship with God*

***Isa 25:6*** *On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*

*In fact, it is a picture of the new life we have in Christ*

***Isa 55:1*** *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money,*

*come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

**Alcohol in the New Testament**

**Oinos (wine)**

Oinos is the Greek used to translate the Hebrew words that refer to an alcoholic drink (yayin, tirosh, 'asis, shekar, hamer, mesek).

**Jesus Drank Wine**

The Lord Jesus himself was accused of being both a glutton and a drunkard. But Jesus was sinless so these accusations are, just that, accusations. Just because Jesus ate bread and drank wine with sinners doesn’t make him one.

**Matthew 11:18-19** For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

A good side note for the context of some of these accusations: John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus were both citied mainly for their message but it was there lifestyle that the accusers focused on. John, was a Nazarite, and lived in the wilderness and neither ate bread nor drank wine (he ate locusts and wild honey, cf. Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6), while Christ, a Nazarene (not a Nazarite, but a Nazarene i.e. one from Nazareth), ate bread and drank wine.

**Jesus made more Wine**

-The same oinos that makes one drunk (Eph. 5:18) was created and given in plenty by Jesus to be served at a wedding feast. (John 2:1-11).

After tasting the wine which the Lord had created, the master of the feast told the bridegroom that it was the custom to give the guests "the good wine" first "and when the guests have well drunk" (literally, "when they become drunk") then to give them the inferior wine.

The Greek word for "drunk" (Jn. 2:10), methuo is used without exception in the New Testament to refer to one being intoxicated (Mt. 24:49; Acts 2:15; 1 Cor. 11:21; 1 Thess. 5:7; Rev. 17:2,6).

The Greek word for "drunkard" (methusos , cf. 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor. 6:10) is a form of methuo. One other form of methuo is found in the New Testament, methuskomai (Lk. 12:45; Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:7), and this word also refers without exception to one being intoxicated.

Christ is not condoning drunkenness here, if so he would contradict his own holy scriptures. but he is giving His approval for the lawful consumption of alcoholic beverages in social contexts.

**Paul prescribes wine for physical help**

The same oinos that could intoxicate (Eph. 5:18) was hailed for its medicinal value by Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 5:23).

**1 Tim. 5:23** No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

This is not a mere suggestion from Paul to Timothy, but a command from his Pastor (literally, "Stop using water any longer, but continuously use a little wine on account of your stomach and your frequent health issue.") And since God inspired it into Scripture, it undergirds the teaching that alcohol is a good gift from God and the directive to Timothy even has value in principle to believers beyond Timothy.

**Church leaders must only drink in Moderation**

The same oinos that had the capacity to inebriate (Eph. 5:18) was not forbidden but must only be enjoyed in moderation by elders/deacons (1 Tim. 3:2,8)

**1 Tim. 3:2-3** Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard…

**1 Tim. 3:8** Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine

**The fruit of the vine**

(Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 22:18)

This phrase does not refer to some kind of unfermented grape juice any more than does the phrase "the blood of grapes" (in Gen. 49:11 "the blood of grapes" is parallel to yayin i.e. alcoholic wine, and in Deut. 32:14 "the blood of grapes" is parallel to hamer i.e. fermented wine).

(2) If taken quite literally, "the fruit of the vine" would refer to whole grapes, thus the phrase must be used figuratively in some sense.

(3) ***One writer*** summarizes the distinct Jewish meaning of the phrase as follows:

The expression the "fruit of the vine" is employed by our Savior in the synoptical Gospels to denote the element contained in the cup of the Holy Supper. The fruit of the vine is literally the grape. But the Jews from time immemorial have used this phrase to designate the wine partaken of on sacred occasions, as at the Passover and on the evening of the Sabbath.

The Mishna expressly states, that, in pronouncing blessings, "the fruit of the vine" is the consecrated expression for yayin.. . . .

The Christian Fathers, as well as the Jewish rabbis, all understood "the fruit of the vine" to mean wine in the proper sense. Our Lord, in instituting the Lord’s Supper availed himself of the expression invariably employed by his countrymen in speaking of the wine of the Passover. On other occasions, when employing the language of common life, he calls wine by its ordinary name. So, while some in a modern day have tried to argue that “the fruit of the vine” is not necessarily a reference to wine but could have been a reference to grape juice is simply not embracing the context and the culture whereby wine was normal and what was used at the Passover table and grape juice in that day was not normative in any way because the moment the grape was juiced it began to ferment making it additionally highly impractical that grape juice is what is meant by the “fruit of the vine”.

Just as Isaiah can refer to "a vineyard of red wine" (hamer, fermented wine ) in Isaiah 27:2 because fermented wine is derived from the vineyard, in like manner Jesus refers to "the fruit of the vine" and means the fermented wine that is derived from the fruit of the vine.

Christ teaches that the "fruit of the vine" signifies "My blood of the new covenant" (Mt. 26:28). Though the phrase, "the blood of grapes" is not used in the Last Supper account, it is difficult to overlook the parallel between the "blood of grapes" and the "blood of the new covenant."

Remember, "the blood of grapes" is used synonymously for both yayin (alcoholic wine) in Genesis 49:11, and for hamer (fermented wine) in Deuteronomy 32:14.

Finally, evidence that the wine used for the Lord’s Supper by the early church was intoxicating is evident in Paul’s admonishment of the Corinth church for some were partaking of the Lord's Supper in a drunken state as a result (cf. 1 Cor. 11:21 where the verb metheuo is used i.e. intoxicated). Although wine was clearly abused by the Corinthian believers in conjunction with the Lord's Supper, Paul does not condemn the Corinthian Christians for using wine, nor does he prohibit the use of wine in the Lord's Supper.

Paul's correction is directed toward their sinful abuse of wine not their lawful use of it and called them back to a correct use according to what the Lord instructed. We’ll come back to this later.

**Gleukos (new wine)**

Gleukos was certainly capable of intoxication for the disciples are accused of being filled with gleukos (new wine) in Acts 2:13. Whereas Peter attributes the behavior of the disciples not to drunkenness (metheuo), but to the Spirit of God (Acts 2:15).

Therefore, the words used for wine in the New Testament (oinos, sikera, gleukos) speak of beverages that have the capacity to intoxicate contrary to the view of some who would argue that wine in the New Testament was so diluted with water that it was almost impossible to intoxicate using it, or that the wine of the New Testament was essentially grape juice.

When studying the whole of the NT, there is no reference in the New Testament to unfermented grape juice, but all references are to fermented wine.

***The symbolism of wine for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who cannot be limited by old traditions.***

***Matt 9:17*** *Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.*

**So we saw in this lesson that:**

God's word must be the ultimate authority in our lives,

that our conscience is fallible and needs to be conformed to God's word,

that Drunkenness is clearly a Sin--a dangerous and severe sin,

we saw the ways drinks containing alcohol is references in both the Old and New Testaments, particular Positive Law restrictions on some drinking prior to the New Covenant we are in, and Jesus' use and providing of drink containing alcohol

So, why spend time understanding these things.

Because we must br rightly informed about what the bible says about alcohol so we can rightly follow God and his counsel.

This is a topic that for many years has been relegated to strong opinions and even prescribed practices that simply are not biblically grounded and even work against the teaching of the word. This is where war are headed next week.

To look at what does this mean for us, how do we steward alcohol rightly and avoid sin and causing others to stubble.

We will look at popular positrons held by the church in the last few centuries and consider what the bible says about these things.

What does tonight’s study mean for you?

Should you go out and start drinking alcohol if you haven’t previously?

No, no necessarily. If you learn that Meat is a good gift by God and can be enjoyed to his Glory does that mean you must go out and start eating meat? No. But it means you rightly understand what God’s word says and it allows you to be careful to know how not to misrepresent the Lord regarding this topic. It also means that there is a God honoring way to enjoy alcohol and like everything else we should engage in an accountable way to avoid sin and not cause others to stumble.

I cant stress enough how important is ti that you come next week for part two.