

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCE THREE – ALCOHOL Copyright 2024, Paul F Spite

**(This is based on belief in God. If that offends you, stop reading now)**

In this presentation, we look at the wide-ranging use of alcohol.

A science teacher once placed a live worm inside a full bottle. All watched the worm struggle and die. The instructor then asked what the lesson meant. One student replied, ‘If you drink, you won’t get worms?’ People laugh at this story, and other warnings about alcohol, till the drug stops being amusing and becomes a dangerous addiction. How do we stop, before we wake to find we no longer control our drinking, but it controls us?

An instructor could show up drunk and it would make you angry. Your time and money spent for the class, wasted by a clown who can’t even put together a coherent sentence. A small chunk of your life, lost because of their lack of self-control and failure to meet your expectations for a teacher. Like what our parents, co-workers, spouses, families and friends experience, when we drink. When does the pain outweigh the gain? At what point is the trouble it causes, not worth the pleasure from drinking? (To be continued)

### **General Description of Drugs in this Class**

These are liquids, derived by allowing various fruits, grains and other organic substances to ferment, producing a gas inside the liquid called alcohol.

**Common Street Names:** Beer, wine, liquor, mixed drinks, shots, various specialty drinks

### **How Alcohol Affects Users**

Following a drink, alcohol rapidly absorbs into blood through the stomach and small intestine, then circulates through the body and organs. The liver tries to change it from a poison to water and carbon dioxide, but often cannot keep up, so blood content rises. As a depressant, it interferes with many normal body processes, including thinking, coordinated movement, reflexes, memorization, urination, circulation, body temperature, sleep and so on.

### **Legitimate Medical Uses:**

Some medicines, like cough syrups and laxatives, have a high alcohol content.

### **Reasons Behind Alcohol Use:**

People of all ages use alcohol, but early and late onset both describe problem drinking. Long-term heavy drinkers find that metabolisms slow over time, so the same amount packs a more powerful punch, is more addictive and destructive. Others develop drinking issues after major life changes; employment loss, failing health or deaths of friends or loved ones. These can bring loneliness, boredom, anxiety and depression, major factors in later alcohol misuse. A drink first seems to bring relief from stress, but then use begins to cause problems and trouble.

Help is recommended if someone drinks to calm nerves, forget worries or reduce depression. Gulping down drinks or needing more than one drink a day are signs of dependence. Lying about, or hiding alcohol use, hurting themselves or others when drinking, needing more to reach the same high, feeling irritable and resentful when not drinking, or facing medical, social, or financial worries caused by drinking, are all good reasons to seek intervention.

Common reasons people give for drinking include; getting drunk, getting a buzz, it’s fun, being sociable, it’s enjoyable or they like the taste. More selfish reasons, where our needs take

precedence over those of everyone else around us, include; it helps us relax, gives us confidence, helps us sleep, reduces anxiety, stops our worrying, lessens stress, reduces panic attacks, helps with depression, we need it to get by, to counteract withdrawal symptoms, helps us cope with life and work, deal with bereavement, handle family pressure, deal with failed relationships and cope with money worries. The common theme to these is a way of escape. Alcohol delays facing or dealing with problems, so no healing can occur and wounds stay fresh.

With younger users, it's a way to pass time and seek friends. Their reasons include; alleviating boredom, engaging in a habit, everyone around them does it and they are expected to as well, it's part of their job, they make others around them uncomfortable by abstaining. The last excuse sounds as bogus as it is. Drinking gives them a built in excuse to behave in ways they could not justify, without alcohol to blame their behavior upon.

Society does say there are some who should never drink. Their physiology makes them overly sensitive to it. Once some begin drinking, they cannot stop. Some become dangerous when drinking and fight or commit crimes. Women who are pregnant are discouraged, as is anyone planning to drive afterwards. Some over-the-counter or prescription medications are dangerous with alcohol. There are medical conditions that worsen when drinking. Recovering alcoholics should never drink again, nor should anyone under the age of twenty-one.

## **Consequences for Abuse of Alcohol**

### Physical Health

Even a little alcohol impairs judgment, coordination and reaction times, increasing risk of work and household accidents, falls and hip fractures and car crashes. High blood pressure, ulcers and diabetes worsen. Combined with aspirin, it increases bleeding in the stomach, cold and allergy medicines creates drowsiness and with acetaminophen, damages livers. Sustained drinking causes certain cancers, liver cirrhosis, immune system disorders and brain damage.

### Mental Health

Drinking can make people forgetful and confused, seeming similar to Alzheimer's.

### Probability of Addiction / Dependence

Alcoholism is diagnosed as a disease that includes; a strong craving, need or urge to drink, not being able to stop drinking once begun, physical withdrawal symptoms like nausea, sweating, shakiness and anxiety after stopping and the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get "high." At that point, the drink has taken you, not vice versa.

### Social or Societal Consequences

Abusing alcohol creates serious conflicts with family, friends and coworkers. The more drunk, the more trouble at work, with friends and even strangers. Want to get hurt? Impair your coordination, slow your reactions, then let whiskey courage pick a fight with someone much tougher and less impaired. Your friends are not laughing with you. They're laughing at you.

### Legal Consequences

Harming or killing others while driving under the influence will result in loss of driving privileges and probable incarceration.

## **The Trap Associated With Alcohol Use:**

Using alcohol can swiftly consume and control all aspects of life. Once the problem is acknowledged, can a problem drinker simply cut back? If that person has become an alcoholic, the answer is "no." They almost never succeed. Abstaining is usually required for recovery and changing or avoiding everything triggering drinking in the past. Recovering alcoholics shouldn't hang out at parties.

### **The Rest of the Story:**

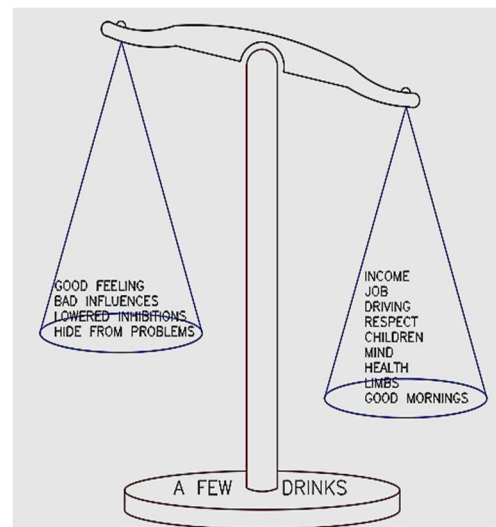
There are some lessons, from which we can learn. The purpose of pain is to teach us when something is harmful and should not be repeated. I once used an electric hedge trimmer with one hand, to shape some bushes. Till the trimmer bounced off one limb and swung back to remove the tip of a finger on the other hand. What did I learn in a few tenths of a second? Anything that can cut off branches has little problem cutting flesh. Age does not necessarily result in wisdom. Since I never intend to experience that again, I take steps to avoid it. When the manufacturer prints out safety instructions, like hang onto the handle during use, it is to keep us from harm.

In college, I had one friend blow his face up, stubbing a cigarette out in an empty whiskey bottle. A roommate almost lost his fiancé because of a one-night stand while drunk. Another friend, expelled from college after her underage brother suffered alcohol poisoning at a party he attended with her. Three sisters with lives lost to health issues exacerbated by alcohol.

What have I learned about drinking? Anything that kills worms has no problem destroying livers, incomes, families and lives. Age does not necessarily result in wisdom. If I am normal and it hurts me, I will take steps to avoid it in the future. When the Creator prints out safety instructions, like in Proverbs where we are told "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging," it is for a purpose. They keep us from harm.

### **A Practical Application**

On one side of a scale, let's place everything we can lose as a result of drinking. Start with income, employment, driving privileges, self-respect, respect of others, children, family, spouses, transportation, freedom, a life without restrictions, dignity, a clear mind, better health, mornings free of headaches and working limbs. On the side, let's place what we can gain. Friends we only see when getting in trouble, lowered inhibitions, enjoyment for a time, escape from worries, etc. Then let's compare the weight and the worth of these things .



### **A Historical Application:**

In a book named after him, Jonah didn't run into a bottle to get away from his problems, but he did wind up in the drink. He had a specific job to do, for the God who created him. Instead he headed directly away from his responsibilities. A terrible storm, getting tossed overboard and spending three days in digestive juices in the belly of a great fish, changed his mind. He was quite sobered up and ready to preach repentance to Ninevah.

There are easy ways to do what we were created to do, and there are hard ways. Running from our responsibilities through the abuse of alcohol? That's a hard way.

### **Trying Out a Better Way:**

If a tree produces apples, what kind of a tree am I looking at? If the fruits of something are primarily evil, what kind of tree is it? It is an evil tree. If the fruit of alcohol use is the production of evil in my life, and it keeps hurting me, how much pain will it take before I stop? Perhaps we need to take a closer look at the fruit of the tree.



Jonah and the Whale - Tavella

