

Listen!

By Mark McCrary

Interpersonal relationships are crucial to us as human beings. One of the first statements of God regarding us was, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). But, sometimes relationships, as important as they are, are challenging to maintain—even among Christians. There are times when brothers and sisters in Christ don't get along with one another.

One of the greatest skills necessary in those moments is the very one that is often not found: the ability to actually listen to others in conflict. So often, we formulate preconceived ideas about what someone thinks, what their motivations are, what they are really getting at; then, our reactions are based not on what they are saying or doing, but on our preconceptions of what they are thinking and meaning. As a result, communication stops, and conflict arises. This happens in homes, in churches, in businesses—everywhere there are people.

What can we do about this?

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20).

Within the context, James is likely addressing our need to listen to God and His instructions to us, but it certainly also has great application in our relationships with one another. How much we would be helped if we slowed down and just listened! Not for-

ulate a rebuttal! Not vent all my frustrations! Not psychoanalyze my opponent at the moment! Not even view the one with whom I am in conflict as my opponent! Saber rattling really does little good in such moment other than encourage the one with whom we disagree to rattle their back at us. Here's a crazy idea: simply listen. Take it in. Seek to understand. Not necessarily agree; just understand.

Something radical might happen if we would only do this. We might find we don't disagree. At the least, perhaps we would find we are a lot closer to than we think. God urged Israel in **Isaiah 1:18**, "Come, let us reason together." May God help us to have the same attitudes as husband and wives, parents and children, elders and congregations, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

What a wonderful resolution it would be to listen and think about what others are saying more. What a wonderful resolution it would be to stop shaking our fists so much and open our ears more. We would likely find that God's ways are actually better than man's wrath at bringing about peace.



Classes This Week

<p>Sunday 7:30 PM College Devo and Singing at the Harris Center. Josh Carter Teaching!</p>	<p>Tuesday 8:00 PM Truth-seekers Campus Study in Room 2225 in Student Center</p>
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Sick

Brad Marshall (Allie Hosey's Cousin)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Kate Miller (Daughter of Brandon and Erin Miller)
Betty Mcareavey (Mary Ann Roberts' mom)	Kevin Simpson	Mark Dean (Father of Logan Dean)	Jerry Foropoulos (Anna Jean's Uncle)
Tom Davis (Walker Davis' Uncle)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	Yolanda Stewart (Michael Bassie's Sister)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Austin Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Grandfather)	Rebecca Davis (Chuck Hahn's Niece)	Camden, grandson of Steve Pruitt (friend of Greg Lanier)
John M. Rhodes and Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family)	Joe Perkins (Scott Perkin's Dad)	Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew)	Johnny Richardson

April Birthdays

- 1-Rachel Hobgood
- 3-Jessica Shaver
- 3-Cameron Abernathy
- 4-Julie Henriquez
- 5-Tate Pender
- 8-Laura Humphrey
- 8-Hannah Morris
- 12-Becky Daniels
- 12-Austin Adams
- 14-Kaylee Searcy
- 14-Jesse Roberts
- 16-Carson Fowler
- 17-Daniel Cobia
- 18-Spencer Sullivan
- 18-Taylor Godwin
- 18-Joel Black
- 20-April Jerkins
- 20-RJ Martin
- 23-Anna Miller
- 24-Bob Simpson
- 26-Latisha Redmon
- 28-Anna Stallings

News and Notes

- ☒ - Lets keep in our prayers our expectant mothers, Laura Humphrey and Nicole Pender!
- ☒ - Ken Sullivan's procedure at UAB was successful! We rejoice in this answered prayer!
- ☒ - Elle Vaughn, baby daughter of Scott and Genna, who now weighs 2.7 pounds and continues to develop well!
- ☒ - Anne Morton had successful surgery last week!
- ☒ - This year's VBS will be June 8-11. VBS topic: "Heroes of the NT"
- ☒ - Please continue to pray for Scott Perkins' dad, Joe.
- ☒ - We welcome Esther Biddle as a member at the University church!
- ☒ - The latest audio is posted to www.auchurch.com and CD's are immediately placed in the foyer.
- ☒ - Josh Carter is leading the last student devotional of the semester tonight. Josh and Katie will be moving to work with the Northwood church in Tuscaloosa.

The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Alcohol and Wisdom

By Doy Moyer



Thoughts to Ponder

Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1)

Elders
Walker Davis (334) 703-0050
Larry Rouse (334) 734-2133

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Most Christians will recognize the difficulties in Scripture over the subject of drinking alcohol. On the one hand, there are passages that speak of "wine" in positive terms (Psalm 104:15; Ecc 10:19). On the other hand, the warnings against strong drink, and especially drunkenness, are clear and unequivocal (Prov 20:1; 21:17; 23:30-31). Drunkenness will keep one out of the kingdom of heaven (Gal 5:21). Drinking parties and the like are among the lusts of men from which Christians are to refrain (1 Pet 4:1-4). Peter speaks of Christians being different enough in this respect that the world thinks it strange that we don't do what they do.

There is much to say about all these, and other, passages. The debate today that rages is not whether people in biblical times drank something that could have, in excess, gotten them drunk. Rather, the question is over whether modern Christians have God's blessing to, or should, engage in "social drinking." I am not discussing medical usage. I am discussing actual drinking of alcohol for non-medical and recreational reasons. I don't expect this debate to go away any time soon, but my purpose here is to consider the issue from a wisdom perspective. What will godly wisdom teach us about choices we make in our modern world relative to drinking alcohol? One thing we can all agree on is this: drunkenness is sinful and will destroy a soul.

I bring up the following issues because anyone thinking about drinking needs to consider the implications of the practice. The biblical warnings are strong enough that anyone considering this should exercise great care and concern before participating in or advocating a practice that could

devastate souls and families. This isn't just about whether we can find passages here and there that support or deny a position given a variety of contexts. God's word is meant to give us wisdom to discern right from wrong (Heb 5:14). In the face of difficulties, we need to think things out and decide, with wisdom from above, whether or not this is an activity Christians ought to be involved in today. Following are some principles that I keep in mind and urge others to consider:

1. Drunkenness is a process, not just a state. At what point do you call a person drunk? One doesn't just drink and drink, unaffected, then suddenly is drunk at the next sip. It takes time for the alcohol to take effect. Further, the point at which one is drunk is person-dependent, and the only way to know when too much has been imbibed is to test it out. In other words, you will never know your limits on this until you've exceeded them. Does this sound wise? Even law enforcement today will charge someone with DUI over a small percentage of a difference in the level of alcohol in one's system. And isn't it interesting that the person getting drunk usually won't think he is drunk? Alcohol (and other drugs) breaks down inhibitions and warps one's ability to make sound judgments. One of those warped judgments is just how sober one really is while in the process of drinking.

Now I realize that this same problem would have been around in biblical times. However, see the next point.

2. The reasons for drinking today are not exactly the same as in ancient times. We can find passages that speak favorably of "wine," but should all of these be equated to our modern circumstances? They didn't have

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a great deal of variety when it came to quenching a thirst, and their water wasn't exactly the healthiest option unless something that could kill any threats therein was added. It wasn't always just about the taste; usually the alcohol was diluted. With as much emphasis as some will put on understanding the ancient culture as so important to understanding any given text, I find it odd that they won't say the same when it comes to the passages dealing with alcohol. If our circumstances today were identical to the ancients, that would be one thing. But when it comes to drink and thirst quenching, it is not quite the same.

3. In connection with the above, the alcohol industry of the ancient world was not what it is today either. I'm sure that people might have made money selling fermented juice, but it wasn't a multi-billion dollar industry that depends upon people, including those with real problems, buying and consuming their products. Distilled liquor is not equivalent to ancient drinks. I seriously doubt that you would have seen billboards advertising the glories of the product. While "wine" is used to translate a number of Hebrew and Greek terms that includes the juice still in the grape to the stronger stuff, you still wouldn't have had the vast array of choices found in modern liquor stores. People could certainly get drunk back then, and they did, but it was not nearly the type of industry being flaunted today. What does this have to do with it all? Simply this. Drinking fermented juice with alcoholic content, typically diluted, was part of a daily culture that had little choice in drinks and needed its water content doctored. I don't doubt that it would have tasted good and refreshing to them, but I do doubt that the typical person would have normally gotten drunk, which is why the drinking parties warned about would have been significant. I just don't believe our cultures compare very well in this respect. I may be wrong, but I need to see more evidence that shows comparable cultures in these areas.

4. Alcoholism today is a real and serious problem that is never helped by anyone flaunting the right to drink. If Romans 14 teaches anything, it is that we must not use any perceived rights to the detriment of our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. If someone is struggling with alcoholism, we must respond with compassion and a desire to help. It is bad enough that this person, even after receiving help, may well be tempted by the mere suggestion. The fact is that alcoholism is a serious, recognized problem today, and it is often attended with other debilitating issues like depression (as the recent situation with Robin Williams would show). I cannot be party to that, especially since it is so unnecessary today.

5. If you have never been around a real drinker and witnessed first hand the havoc drinking can bring into a home, then you ought to educate yourself about this problem. I have seen it first hand, and it's not pretty. Homes have been destroyed. Many lives have been lost. Honestly, it angers me when I see billboards depicting some "man of distinction" holding his alcohol and acting as if this is the life. They won't show you the highway

wrecks (not something you would have seen in the ancient world), the shed blood, the devastated homes and children, just because someone wanted to be a "man of distinction." You may say that this doesn't "prove" it's wrong, and no, it doesn't. But neither can we afford to ignore the fact that alcohol consumption has done untold damage to modern families and society. You can justify drinking all you wish, and you can point to this or that passage, but I refuse to throw in with something that is both so unnecessary and so destructive in our modern context. If you are going to favor drinking, then you need to be familiar with the problems that can arise from it. You may think you can handle it, but what alcoholic today began drinking without thinking that he can handle it? You have to ask if that unnecessary risk of 1) starting down a path that may destroy you, your family, and others, and 2) influencing another that cannot handle it, is worth your public support. No non-drinker becomes a problem drinker until he starts drinking. But now why exactly does someone want to start drinking? Why today?

6. The comparisons between drinking alcohol and other "bad habits" just doesn't work, unless we are actually talking about drugs that significantly alter sobriety and the ability to make sound judgments. There are plenty of those types of drugs, but comparing drinking to eating donuts is ludicrous. We aren't just talking here about long-term health. We are talking about the immediate effects that destroys one's ability to think. If eating donuts does that to you, then by all means quit eating them. But I have yet to meet the person who destroyed a family or killed someone in a car wreck over losing one's mind on donuts. If that kind of comparison is the justification for drinking today, then sell it elsewhere.

7. With the above principles in mind, I simply ask myself:
Is it the right thing to do today?
Is it the wise thing to do today?
Is it something that will glorify God today?
Is it something that will strengthen my family today?
Is it something that will yield a proper influence on others today?
Is it something that will keep my thinking sharp and focused on the Kingdom?
Is it something that will enable my faith to grow stronger?
Is it something that I am comfortable doing in the Lord's presence?
Is it something that I am comfortable doing with the Lord present in me?

Now one might say, "You can apply those questions to many activities." So be it. But that doesn't change the topic under consideration right now that involves something that has been proven to be so mind-altering, destructive, and deadly. Just consider. The choices we make about this issue can, in the most literal sense, mean life or death.



Fellowship

By Bill Hall

What about fellowship? Doesn't the Bible teach that the church is to have fellowship? Indeed!

The Bible does teach that the church is to have fellowship. But what a lot of people have overlooked is the fact that the word "fellowship" in the Scriptures has to do with spiritual activities. I have before me a photocopy out of a book that I have which contains every Scripture that uses the Greek word for fellowship. An interesting thing about this is — not one time does it have reference to social fellowship. What does the word fellowship mean? It is defined as "sharing, communion, and participation in, joining together."

Another usage of "fellowship" in modern times is social fellowship. This is where we smell the doughnuts and coffee. Friday night a bunch of us got together and had some elk stew, and I tell you it was all right. We had a good time together. We socialized together. We shared in the eating of elk stew and a few other things that some of the people brought. Are you aware that the Bible never uses the word "fellowship" in reference to such social activities?

Still another use of "fellowship" has to do with spiritual things. Every time, every time the word is used in regards to the church's activity, it is always this. And to my knowledge, there is not one Scripture in the Bible that uses the term "fellowship" in regard to eating elk stew, or whatever socializing we do together. Not one Scripture that uses the word "fellowship" like that. Fellowship has everything to do with our sharing together in spiritual things.

The local church where you are a member has a fellowship hall. When you are assembled together with the other members share together in worshiping God and studying God's word, you are in it! We must learn that this is the kind of fellowship that the Bible talks about.

What has happened to us, brethren, when every time we hear the word "fellowship" we immediately think in terms of fun and games and eating and drinking together? What has happened to us that we see that, every time we see the word "fellowship," when it is never used in the Bible that way?

No, you cannot find the authority for a local church, as a part of its program of work,

planning and providing materials for social activities in the word "fellowship" in the Bible, because it doesn't use the word "fellowship" in that way.

May I make this point? The local church where you are a member has a fellowship hall. Let me say that again. The local church where you are a member has a fellowship hall. When you are assembled together with the other members share together in worshiping God and studying God's word, you are in it! We must learn that this is the kind of fellowship that the Bible talks about.

Is there a place for social activities? Indeed. But let me provide for hospitality. Let me provide for social events. And if others want to join with me in that, that's fine. But let not the church be charged or burdened (**cf. 1 Tim. 5:16**) with providing for social activities, so the church can do the things God has told His church to do. It's just that simple. And nowhere in the Scriptures is there anything to indicate that the church is to provide materially and plan for social activities. That is the issue. That is where the truth lies.

