

Standards for Living

[Preached 2-19, 2-26, and 3-5-17, by Matt DeBord]
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If illegal drugs were legalized, would you take them?

Having been illegal (and lethal) for all these years, and you knowing the consequences and effects they have on people's lives, families, and businesses.. If illegal drugs, tomorrow, were made legal, would you purchase and use them?

If you would say, "Yes!" I want to ask you: What is your standard for living?

Is it the laws and regulations of the United States? Or is it the Word of God?

If you would take these drugs simply because they are legal now, knowing the destruction of life associated with them, knowing the risk... I must ask, "Where is the standard of God in your life?"

Surely you do not trust the law makers to adhere to the Word of God, do you?

Surely, you would say, "No! I would NOT use those drugs, knowing that the life that results from such does not honor my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!"

For those of you who indeed would say, "No! I would not take them even if they were legal, for I do not want to destroy my life, and I certainly do not want to dishonor my King," ... I have another consideration for you:

Once they had been legal for 10 years, and you found that there were people who socially got together and recreationally used just a little bit of cocaine, just a little bit of heroin, just a little bit of these drugs... would you join in?

You would not be "getting plastered", but just using them in "moderation."

You have heard of "social drinking". Would you engage in "social drugging"?

Surely, we would say, "No, I would not, because my standards for living are found in the Word of God, not in the laws of the USA. And God's standards would drive me away from these things, because they are destructive and evil."

Today I want to talk to you about Standards for Living! We get our standards from God and His Word, not from how everybody else is doing it, not from our emotional thoughts about it, and not from the United States Government. Our standards are much MUCH higher! They come from the Lord, Jesus Christ!

Now, I want to ask you a question: Are there things in your life that are a dishonor to God, even if you won't get convicted or incarcerated for them? ... things that go against God's principles for life?

Today, we will look at principles from Scripture that show God's standards for life. And even though I will use the "question" about Alcohol (a legal substance) as one example, I hope you will be wise enough to apply these principles to anything in your life where there may be a question like:

"Is there anything wrong with this?" **or** "Does this honor God, or not?" **or** "Is this a form of evil or not?" etc.

[smoking, illegal drugs, abuse of prescription drugs, gambling, embezzling, attitudes of the heart, cheating in school, premarital sex, immoralities of all kinds, lifestyles, choices, worldly activities and behaviors, etc.]

In other words, even if bitterness, hatred, anger, and unforgiveness... ("spirits" we often feel we have the "right" to embrace) Even if these become the "going" or "accepted" thing in our society, will you embrace them? Or will you sift them by the principles in the Word of God?

If you will use the following scriptural principles ("standards") to develop your perspectives and lifestyle, you will do well in your quest to be right with God. That is, if you desire to be "pleasing" to Him as we spoke about last week.

If you really want to be right with God (pleasing), let me encourage you to ask Him about these matters. Don't hunt for excuses, loopholes, etc. Simply be on a mission to walk with Jesus in holiness and in faithful service, where your life and testimony are not destroyed by your lifestyle or behavior!

Proverbs 16:25 - NASB

"There is a way which **seems right** to a man, but its end is the way of death."

What if, what I've been *thinking was right*, is a way of **death**? How can I know? Seek God's Spirit, be obedient to His Word, and you'll be on the path of **life**!

1 Thessalonians 5:22 - KJV

"Abstain from all appearance of evil." - ["every form" - NASB]

Let's look at biblical principles involving your **spirit**, your **body**, your **mind**, and your **life**... → **STANDARDS for LIVING!**

1. Your SPIRIT (Heart) - [the "why" or the *reason* you do what you do]

The **MOTIVE**: I do assume you **want** to be right with God NO MATTER WHAT!

Not like some who will go to the Bible verses that talk about wine, and begin looking for ways to justify their drinking (in the same way the man who was "wishing to justify himself" asked, "Who is my neighbor?" - Luke 10:29). Like: What's wrong with a little wine or a light beer?

Proverbs 16:2 - NASB

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives.” - [The KJV says, “...spirits.”]

They did drink wine in Bible times. Whereas we will not examine here every passage that mentions wine, I will remind you that “wine” in the Bible was everything from freshly crushed grapes (juice), to that which had fermented a little because they had no refrigeration, to that which was really strong in its fermentation. And whereas I have no doubt that there were those who kept it for a long time with the motive of getting the “alcoholic” content greatly increased, we need to see the difference between the use of grapes in that culture and time in history, over against the mass production in our present day of that which is processed to be intoxicating.

Their water was often contaminated, such that fermented grape juice was much healthier than drinking the water. All these factors cloud our discussion simply using the word, “wine.” But again, I will ask you, what is your motive? Are you looking for a loophole, or are you looking to honor your God?

Because so often our question is not, “How can I best honor You, Jesus?”... but “Well, what’s wrong with it?” ... We should be asking: “Does this bring glory to God?” and “Does this activity (whatever it is) fit into God’s plan for my life?”

1 Corinthians 10:31 - NASB

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

So, you want to get a nose ring? O.K., that’s what **you** want! But the question is, “What is your motive? Will it bring glory to God?” Someone else may want to try drugs, smoke a pipe, get revenge, or get a hobby. [**“whatever”** you do...] Our motive in all things is to glorify God!

2. Your BODY

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - NASB

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore **glorify** God in your body.” ← **motive** (again)

Paul did tell Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach and for his “frequent ailments” (in other words, for medicinal purposes). Someone will quickly say, “Well, that’s why I use it!” Listen, I am not so naïve as to think that I shall sway the thinking of those who do not care about Christ, or of those who are only looking to justify themselves. Today, I am speaking to those who have an actual desire to please God.

God gave you your body, one of if not your most precious personal possessions.

If you do not take care of it, you will find how nothing else in life is worth much since you cannot experience it, because you are so physically incapacitated. Take care of your body! Consider the effects of smoking, drugs, gluttony, etc.

Professor Don Nelson of the University of Cincinnati's School of Medicine noted that "any amount of alcohol kills cells in every organ of the body." Consequently, alcohol in any amount "causes permanent brain damage, primarily to the outer layers of the cortex, which governs complex thinking."

Over 5000 infants are born each year with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome causing irreversible physical and mental damage. Another 50,000 infants are born each year with Fetal Alcohol Effect resulting in serious birth defects. Sometimes, it's not just your body!

Some findings say that women who drink just one alcoholic drink a day increase the risk of cancer 50 to 100 %.
2009 study: 2,100 Australians die from alcohol-related CANCER each year.
2011 study: 1 in 10 men and 1 in 33 women with cancer is alcohol related.

Also, and **more significantly**, since your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, when you do that which destroys your body, you greatly limit your experience with Christ, and your influence for His name! He is your life! You're a temple! When you are considering doing anything, ask, "Is this indicative (descriptive) of a temple of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ?" You are "not your own" to do whatever you please. You belong to God! You were bought with the blood of Jesus Christ! Bring glory to Him with your **spirit** and your **body!** You cannot do that when you are "noticeably impaired." Which leads us into the 3rd point:

3. Your MIND - [Who's making the decisions? Who's in **CONTROL?**]

Ephesians 5:18 - NASB

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

We are supposed to be giving God control of our lives! How can I relinquish (yield) control of my life to God, when I do not have that control to give... because I am out of control, or intoxicated with some other substance or spirit?

[wine / drugs / sexual immorality / passions / greed / anger / selfishness, etc]

We are to be intoxicated by (under the influence of) the Holy Spirit!
Could you be convicted of a considerable amount of alcohol in your system?
Could you be convicted of a recognizable amount of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Proverbs 20:1 - NASB

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise."

Hosea 4:11 - NASB

“Harlotry, wine, and new wine take away the understanding.”

Isaiah 5:11-12 (excerpts) - NASB

“Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink; who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! And their banquets are accompanied by... *instruments*, and by wine; but they do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord.”

Jesus wants complete control! He wants us to “pay attention” to Him!
Satan would love for alcohol (or anything else) to be in control of your life!

Matthew 5:21-22 (excerpts) - NASB

You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not commit murder”...
But I say to you that everyone who is **angry** with his brother shall be guilty...”

What is controlling your life right now? What is the **driving force**? (anger, lust, alcohol, any substance, passion, unforgiveness, pride, ambition... **or JESUS**?)

When you have a question about anything, ask, “Will this control my spirit, my body, or my mind?” Also ask, “Does this fit **my life** with Jesus?”

4. Your LIFE - [**Environment & Direction**] - Beware of dangerous paths, etc.!

John 10:27 - “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

Psalms 23:1-3 (excerpts) - KJV

“The LORD is my Shepherd... He maketh me to lie down in green pastures...
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake...”

Our Shepherd secures for us peace, providence, protection, and purpose. Sift your questions by asking, “Does this fit the Lord’s **paths of righteousness**?”
And notice: Jesus leads us in specific paths that “His name” might be exalted and honored (not yours or mine). Does your lifestyle honor Jesus’ name?

Proverbs 22:3 - NASB

“The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naïve go on, and are punished for it.”

What kind of “evil” results from anger? → [Revenge, retaliation, murder, etc.]
Should we not “hide ourselves” from anger so as to not reap its consequences?

Also: 75 to 100,000 deaths per year are due to alcohol (in our country alone).
Alcohol is implicated in at least 10-20,000 highway (roads & streets) fatalities.
[100s of thousands more are injured]
[1.4 million are arrested for DWI each year (780,000 are convicted).]

The following are old statistics, but give an idea of the problem of alcohol: The FBI reports that alcohol is involved in at least 70% of murders, 41% of assaults, 53% of fire deaths, 50% of rapes, 60% of crimes against children, 60% of child abuse, 37% of suicides, and **53% of ALL ARRESTS**.
Is this something you really want to be part of (associated with)?

Nearly 3% of the American college population will die from alcohol related causes. 30% of academic failures by college students are alcohol-related. 90% of all vandalism on college campuses is alcohol-related. Alcohol is involved in 66% of college suicides, 90% of campus rapes, and 95% of violent crimes on college campuses. – [Facts & Issues, Vol. 17, #1.]
Is this something you really want to be part of (associated with)?

DO NOT “go on” and be punished for it, as Prov. 22:3 says. “Hide yourself!” [1 Thessalonians 5:22: “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”]

When Satan used Bible verses to justify his temptations in Matthew 4, Jesus said, “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test” (Matthew 4:7b). Don’t be like Satan and use God’s own Word to justify fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. Do not test God with a **“rationalized as justified”** lifestyle!

So, to begin with: Sift your lifestyle questions through these standards:

1. Spirit (heart - motive):

What is my motive for doing this? Will this bring glory to God?
“...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

2. Body:

Am I taking care of my God-given body? Is this descriptive of a temple of God?
“...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... you are not your own... you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

3. Mind:

Is this controlling my life, or is the Holy Spirit of Jesus controlling me?
“Do not get drunk with wine..., but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

4. Life:

Will this enhance the Lord’s peace, protection, and abundance in my life?
Does this fit my Shepherd’s paths of righteousness in which He is leading me?
“My sheep... follow Me” (John 10:27). “The LORD... my Shepherd... leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:1, 3 – excerpts).

It only takes a couple of these 8 principles (really just 1) to negate justification of any activity or attitude that will damage your walk with Christ or lifestyle.

5. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Ephesians 4:27, 6:11 - NASB

“Do not give the devil an opportunity (*“a place”* - *KJV*) ... Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

“Come on, Preacher! I don’t drink to get drunk. What’s so bad about it?”
We are in a spiritual war with Satan! Don’t be the best man on his team!

How many alcoholics got started drinking by deciding one day that they wanted to destroy their own life, their family’s life, and the life of any person who got in their path? Most alcoholics, obviously, just started with “social” drinking!

1 Peter 5:8-9a - NASB

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith,”
[...*others do!*]

We do have an “adversary”! If spiritual warfare demands an “alert” “sober” spirit, there are certain things that will incredibly impair the soldier’s ability to function at peak level!

How can you resist the devil, when you have decided that the things he uses to destroy people’s lives are O.K., and they now sit in your refrigerator, kitchen cabinets, closets, bedrooms, etc.? [also: other things that reside in your heart?]

So, does this mean I’ll never drive a vehicle, since they are sometimes used in robberies, murders, and other violent crimes? Will I never use knives in cooking since some people use them in violent crimes? Should I never use a computer since some people use them to engage in all kinds of immorality, a forum for ungodly propaganda, and unethical business practices?

→ “OK, you win your argument! Go do whatever you want to do!” (***sarcasm***)

Again, I am speaking to those who are devoted to Christ... those who have a genuine and an enormous amount of desire to please God.

Check your heart! Check your motive! If your motive is to please God, then examine your lifestyle by God’s Word!

Right now, if we came to search your **house**, what would we find that Satan uses to destroy people?

If we could see into your **heart** as God does, what would we find hiding there that Satan uses to destroy people?

Whose side are you on? → Yours? / The World’s? / Satan’s? **-or-** God’s?

THIS IS WAR !!

6. STEWARDSHIP - [Finances and Time... -AND-
The Gospel = “the mysteries of God” - **1 Cor. 4:1**]

1 Corinthians 4:2 - NASB

“It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”

Luke 16:11 - NASB

“If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon (*riches*), who will entrust the true riches to you?”

Consider: the Prodigal son / the Talents Parable / Teachings on Stewardship

The cost of excessive alcohol consumption in the USA reached \$223 billion in 2006 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
The cost of illegal drug use to the USA is not far behind that.

Proverbs 21:17; 23:21a - NASB

“He who loves pleasure will become a poor man. He who loves wine and oil will not become rich... “For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty.”

Think of all the God-given resources of money and time wasted, and the homes galore destroyed by people seeking “pleasure” through alcohol, drugs, gambling, frivolous pursuits, and even health issues due to poor eating habits.

Ephesians 5:15-16 - NASB

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

7. STUMBLING BLOCK

Whereas there are many substances we abuse, and many spiritual conditions we embrace, I have mostly used alcohol as an example of an outer substance that harms us, and anger as an inner heart condition that defiles us.

Proverbs 22:24-25 - NASB

“Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself.”

The angry, hot-tempered person can be a stumbling block to us!

“The angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression” (**Proverbs 29:22** - NASB).

Romans 14:21 - NASB

“It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.”

How can a little drink cause someone to stumble? What's so bad about it? Again, in the USA alone, 75 to over 100,000 die every year due to alcohol.

Notice the word "**ANYTHING**" – [wine, smoking, drugs, anger, lust, even food...]

1 Corinthians 8:13 - NASB

"Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I may not cause my brother to stumble."

Now we recognize, that if you try to compile a list of every religious conviction that has ever existed, and you try to live within those boundaries, you won't be able to move or function at all! But you can hear the **heart (motive)** in this passage as we relate to those around us to whom we are seeking to witness.

Romans 14:15b, 20a - NASB

"Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died."

"Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food."

If eating certain foods can destroy people for whom Jesus died and tear down the work of God, then surely alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc. are stumbling blocks.

87% of drinking adults began before age 21, and adult alcohol abuse is most common among those who began to drink in their early to mid-teens. In fact, the average age for a new drinker is 12. Very few adults begin drinking alcohol after they reach the legal age. - [Facts and Issues, Vol. 18, #1]

IN AMERICA: over 400,000 deaths per year from **SMOKING** (1000 per day)
 over 50,000 deaths "passive" (2nd hand) smoking (130 a day)
 [1 in every 5 deaths in the USA are due to smoking]

In the USA, smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined. [Facts and Issues, Vol. 17, #2]

Matthew 18:6 - NASB

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

How about your own children?

Do you let your children smoke, do drugs, go off in unchecked fits of anger?

Do you (will you) let your children drink alcohol? Why not?

[Interesting fact: We don't even give alcohol, tobacco, or drugs to our pets!]

[That would be considered cruelty to animals!]

Only 18% of teenagers say "No" to alcohol when their parents use it.

72% of teenagers say "No" to alcohol when their parents do not use it.

Are we causing our OWN CHILDREN to stumble?

[Remember: Alcohol is just one example. What about all else? ...]

Matthew 18:7 - NASB

“Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!”

Is your present lifestyle an encouragement for people to live for Jesus Christ?
-or- Is your present character and lifestyle a stumbling block to those around you who may otherwise be inspired to commit their lives to following Jesus?

Again: Do not think I’m just trying to win an argument. Those who want to be contentious will convince themselves of anything. I am giving those who **want** to be pleasing to Jesus, principles by which to live... and praying that those with other motives will be convicted by the Holy Spirit to make a CHANGE!

ALSO: this is not just about all the “Don’t dos” of being a Baptist or Christian!

It’s about when you are not consumed, intoxicated with, or controlled by all these things, it frees you up to enjoy the life that God has in mind for you. When you are pursuing and engulfed in these hurtful lifestyles or inner spirits or whatever... you are in bondage to them such that you cannot experience the full and meaningful life Christ has offered you!

Now, **I did NOT say** that if you smoke or drink it will send you to hell!

Nor did I say that if you don’t do these things, it will insure heaven for you!

There is only one way to get to heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ!

[John 3:16; 14:6; Eph. 2:8-9; Luke 13:3; Romans 5:8; 1 John 1:9; 1 Peter 2:24]

The hymn, **Living for Jesus**, says, “striving to please Him in all that I do... my heart shall be Thy throne. My life, I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone!”

Now, before we get to the 8th and final principle, someone may well point out the following passage in Colossians and seek to negate any guidelines concerning boundaries for the use of substances.

Colossians 2:20-21 - NASB

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”

Now, indeed, this is a fantastic passage, for it describes the life of one who has “received Christ Jesus as Lord” (2:6).

“And in Him you have been made complete” (2:10a). Keeping a list of rules (“Do not do this! Do not do that!”) will not save you! When someone tries to earn or deserve salvation by keeping a list of rules, they are deceiving themselves, for:

Colossians 2:23 - NASB

“These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

Keeping a list of rules (“the works of the Law”) can appear to be “right,” but as this verse says, they “are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

How can we conquer the flesh?

By receiving Jesus as Lord! He is the “substance” of our salvation (2:17).

Colossians 3:1a, 2-3 - NASB

“If then you have been raised up with Christ...”

“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

You have to die to be saved! Die to the old self! True believers are raised up with Christ, born again to a new self! And this all is brought about by faith in Christ who died on the cross for our sins, paying our penalty that we might live by the grace of God. But in our new life, God has not decided that it is acceptable for us to live any way we would like. Notice Colossians 3:5-6:

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come” (**Colossians 3:5-6**).

When God’s wrath and judgement come, it will be because of those who are still living in the flesh, indulging in worldly desires and deeds.

“and in them (*the deeds of the flesh*) you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth” (**Colossians 3:7-8** - NASB).

We used to live in that way of life, but that’s not who we are anymore!

Colossians 3:9-10 - NASB

“Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the *new self* who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the **image** of the One who created him.”

You are not a new person because you stopped doing all those things...
You stopped doing all those things because you are a new person in Christ!
You now represent Jesus in your *new self* which is being shaped in His **image**.

That brings us to our 8th and final principle, that of being an example. Our lives are to influence others for the sake of Christ by the way we live!

8. SETTING AN EXAMPLE - [Your Witness for Christ & influence on others]

Leviticus 19:1-2 - NASB

The LORD spoke to Moses saying, “Speak to **all the congregation** of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’”

God actually wants us to be like Him! When all we do in desiring to fulfill the lusts of our flesh is ask, “What’s wrong with it?”, we are risking destroying our witness (our influence) for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ!

Acts 1:8 - NASB

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and ***you shall be My witness...***”

The priority of our lives: The Great Commission! [**Not**: The Great Suggestion!] Do not let your witness be destroyed! Be an example to others for Jesus!

45-50% of those identified as Southern Baptists use alcohol at least sometimes and 23% of Southern Baptist families are experiencing significant problems directly related to alcohol. That means that in an average Southern Baptist local congregation, one out of every four families is struggling due to alcohol.

When I consider adding to that the families who are struggling due to drugs, materialism, gambling, immorality, worldly pursuits and passions, I can’t help but wonder, are there any families left who are living in the peace, providence, protection, and “*paths of righteousness*” of our Shepherd, Jesus Christ?

And all I keep hearing is the whining of, “Well, what’s wrong with it?”

Isaiah 5:20-22 - NASB

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink.”

Proverbs 23:29-30 - NASB

“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.”

What’s one of the “going things” today? Going to a wine-tasting!

Leviticus 10:9a, 10 - NASB - [The LORD spoke to Aaron and the priests...] “Do not drink wine or strong drink... so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean.”

God wanted His people to see the difference between that which is a godly lifestyle, and that which is not. And here, He used intoxicating drinks to illustrate that which is profane and unclean.

Some will say, “Yes, but that was for the priests!”

1 Peter 1:15, 2:5, 9 (excerpts) - NASB

“...like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood... you are a... royal priesthood...”

According to 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:5, 9, if you call yourself a Christian, **you** and other believers are to make up a holy kingdom of **priests!** Our doctrine of “the priesthood of the believers” implies that any child of God has personal access to the throne of grace, and can lead others there, too. Your witness (testimony, influence, etc.) is destroyed when you engage and involve yourself in something that has caused so much havoc, destruction and misery in our society!

“The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, ... they totter when rendering judgment. For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place” (**Isaiah 28:7-8** – excerpts).

Can this kind of person represent God and lead others to His throne of grace?

Try life without whatever is controlling your spirit, body, mind, & life.
Try life without neglecting Spiritual Warfare and Godly Stewardship.
Try life without being a Stumbling Block, and **BE (set) an Example!**

How many of you have been intoxicated with alcohol or any number of other things (anger, materialism), more than you have been intoxicated with Christ? Try a better life! It is better! I promise you, based on God and His Word!

If you come into my office next week, and see a BEER, no... a LIGHT BEER on my desk, would you be “O.K.” with that? If you came in for counseling, coming in to get a word from God, and you saw a beer, what would you think? Many would immediately think, “If the preacher is drinking beer, then I guess that whatever I want to do is alright, too. Many would question the integrity of my counsel seeing that I myself would be willing to compromise God’s Word.

“Yes, but you’re the preacher!” Yes, and **you** are a kingdom of priests! Your standard is my standard, and vice-versa. Be an EXAMPLE! Be HOLY!

What are your standards for living?

Maybe you have you a question about something right now, about whether is it right or wrong. Maybe there is something in your life of which you are unsure.

Sift your questions through these 8 principles:

1. Heart (spirit): “Will this bring glory to God?” “What is my motive for this?”
2. Body: “Do I care for my body?” “Is this descriptive of a temple of God?”
3. Mind: “Is this controlling my life, **or** is the Holy Spirit of Jesus in control?”
4. Life: “Does this fit in the Lord’s leading me in paths of righteousness?”
5. Spiritual Warfare: “Will this help me win victories for Jesus’ name?”
6. Stewardship: “Is this destroying my God-given resources?”
7. Stumbling Block: “Am I causing others to stumble by doing this?”
8. Set an Example: “Can others follow this lifestyle and walk with Christ?”
“Or will this destroy my witness for Jesus name?”

If you agree with any 2 or 3 of these eight principles (standards)... if just a couple are truths you would say you live by, then alcohol, drugs, smoking, immorality, wickedness, greed, anger, gossip, etc., etc., are not for you!

1 Thessalonians 5:22 - KJV - “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”
[“every form” – NASB] → Completely stay away from ALL forms of evil!

Ephesians 5:8-10 - NASB

For you were formerly darkness, but **now** you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

This should be your motive! This life is about a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not about doing everything we can get away with, but living for the Lord **freed from** the bondage of worldliness and sin, **freed to** experience the joys and goodness of Christ, actually *wanting* (“motive”) to be pleasing to the Lord.

Do you go to the Bible looking for a way to justify your behavior, attitude, desire, sin, etc.? -**or**- Do you search Scripture in an attempt to please God? “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (**Matthew 5:16** - NASB).

How many people glorify God when they see you drinking alcohol? How many people glorify God when they see you consumed with greed, pride, power, passions, anger, drugs, materialism, gossip, etc.? **Live to glorify your God!**

“The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace... and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (**Romans 8:6, 8**).

Let others see Jesus in you!

Someone may say, “But the Bible says, ‘Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his trouble no more’ (Proverbs 31:6-7).”

So, they may say, “I drink to forget all my problems, since the Bible allows it.”

Again, what is your motive? Is it to pull a text out of the overall context of the Bible, so that you can do what you want? Or is it to bring God glory in all you do? Remember 1 Cor. 10:31b, “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Also, note the context of the full counsel of the Word of God:

“Let all bitterness... be put away from you...” (Ephesians 4:31).

“Consider it all joy ... when you encounter various trials...” (James 1:2-3).

Christians “accepted joyfully” persecution (Hebrews 10:34).

“...rejoicing ...they had been considered worthy to suffer for” Him (Acts 5:41).

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4-8).

When you are intoxicated with Christ, you have a help from His presence, power, and wisdom that far supersedes the perceived need for wine! When you use alcohol (or any other substance, activity, or worldly attitude) to overcome or escape your problems (which they never really can do), you deny the ability of Christ to help you and give you the power to have victory and the triumph that comes from being under the influence of His Holy Spirit. God’s purpose for your life cannot possibly be accomplished when you are consumed with or controlled by some other substance, force, or activity. This dishonors Him!

When you are having a problem, remember Paul’s “secret” for life:

Philippians 4:12-13 - NASB

“I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Jesus will give you victory as you trust Him to provide for you while you follow Him (your Shepherd) in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:1-3).

Philippians 4:19 - NASB

“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 3:17 - NASB

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”