

# OpenTheo

## Proverbs: Food and Wine



### Proverbs - Steve Gregg

In this talk by Steve Gregg, he discusses the contrast between the things of the world and the things of God as described in Proverbs. He reminds us that while God gives us things to enjoy, we must exercise restraint in indulging our cravings at inappropriate times and in inappropriate ways. Gregg also offers caution when it comes to alcohol and warns against the dangers of excess and inappropriate use. Ultimately, he encourages following God's laws and avoiding anything that hinders us from making correct judgments and bringing glory to God.

## Transcript

We're nearing the end of our series on Proverbs. There are many individual Proverbs that we have not looked at and that we may not get a chance to look at because they are perhaps unique statements that maybe I should eventually make a lecture of all the scraps of the Proverbs that don't fall into any of the other categories. But we're looking at the topics that are frequently addressed in Proverbs, and we've gotten through a very large percentage of it.

We have what's left would be a category that I would call avoiding the world's traps. We've had a section where we looked at what he said about wisdom, what he said about living a God-conscious life, and what he said about our moods, and attitudes, and matters of the heart. We've looked extensively at various things the Proverbs say about different human relationships.

And now we come to the matter of remaining untainted from the world. It says in James that pure religion and undefiled before God is this, that one visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and remain untainted or unspotted from the world. And the world we know from 1 John, encompasses three categories.

In 1 John 2, verses 15 through 17, John says, Beloved, do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. And then he says, For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the father that is of the world.

And the world passes away and the lusts thereof, but he that does the will of God abides forever. So, the things of the world are contrary to the things of God. Whoever loves the world does not love God.

James actually says, Whoever be a friend of the world is an enemy of God. Now the world, of course, in this case means a certain specific set of things that are referred to in 1 John as the world. All that is in the world, he said, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The word world obviously can mean different things. Sometimes it is something we should love. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Obviously, that means the people of the world. God loves the population of the world. But when we talk about the world in the negative sense, that which we are not to love, it is speaking about the system, the worldly system of society and its desires and its motivations.

Which are under that one who is called the prince of this world or the God of this world. And that, of course, is Satan. And so there is that system that obeys Satan, that system that represents the worldly society since the fall, which is contrary to God.

And there are three motivations that John identifies, and we find them all in Proverbs. They are the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

It is my opinion that all temptation, all sin falls into one of these categories. And of course, pride may be an umbrella that covers a great number that aren't covered in the other two categories, but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, what are those two things? Well, the lust of the flesh, your flesh is your, well, theologians would differ about this. Some would say your flesh is your fallen nature.

And certainly in some passages in scripture that is so, just the fallen nature. But in many cases in the Bible, the flesh just means your body. Your body is flesh.

And like the word world, the word flesh is used a variety of ways in scripture. Sometimes it means all people, all flesh means all humanity or all living persons. But the flesh can mean either your body in some context, or it can mean your fallen nature in other cases.

Now in the latter, for example, when Galatians chapter five says, the lusts of the flesh or the works, he says, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. And he lists a whole bunch of things, not all of which are bodily things at all. Some of them are like witchcraft and envy and things like that, which don't have to do with bodily appetites.

They have to do with fallenness of the nature. But I believe that when John is delineating things that are in the world, he says, lusts of the flesh, I think he means the lusts of our

bodies. Now, our bodies have certain cravings.

They're built in their glandular. They are in fact, cravings that in many cases are for things that we cannot live without. And that's why we have those cravings.

When God made people, as when he made animals, he made people and animals having cravings for certain things that are necessary for personal or corporate survival. I say or corporate survival, because obviously a craving for sex among those creatures that reproduce sexually is necessary for the survival of the race, but not for the individual. Any individual can survive without sex, but the race cannot survive without sex.

So, because of the need for the race to survive, God has built into people and animals instincts toward sexual attraction. But there are other needs of the body, which are really needs for survival, for personal survival. Food, for example, drink, sleep.

These are things our bodies crave. If they don't get them, they want more of them, because they know that they need them. Now, a desire for food, a desire for drink, a desire for sleep, a desire for sex, even, these are not the result of a thought.

These are the result of God's design. Not necessarily the desire for alcoholic drink, but that is the thirst for fluids that the body needs, as well as food, solid food. It should go without saying, but I'm afraid it doesn't.

Too many people don't realize this, that these desires of the body are not in themselves corrupt. God wants us to enjoy our food. He wants us to enjoy the things he has made for us.

It says that over in First Timothy, chapter six, first Timothy, chapter six, it says in verse 17, command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. God gives us things to enjoy. Some people think that it's the devil that wants us to enjoy our earthly lives, and God wants us to be monkish.

He wants us to be ascetic. He wants us to deny everything enjoyable, because that's spiritual, not so. It says in also First Timothy, chapter four, in verse four, for every creature of God, he means these edible creatures, is good and nothing to be refused if it's received with thanksgiving.

First saints abide by the word of God in prayer. He says in verse three of that chapter, for some people will teach doctrines of demons, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. We're supposed to be thankful and to enjoy what God has provided for us.

He's given us richly all things to enjoy. When he made Adam and Eve, he gave them a

paradise to live in, which he hopes they would enjoy. He made many things enjoyable to the eye and to the palate and to the body.

He made the body in such a way that it would enjoy certain things that it needs. And this is frankly, the goodness of God, because he wouldn't have to do that. He could just say, listen, you need to eat to stay alive.

Therefore, I command you to eat whether you like it or not, or I command you to reproduce. No, it's not going to be enjoyable. You have to do it.

I mean, God could have done it that way and who could have stopped it? Instead, he decided to make those things enjoyable things, the things most necessary. And so he built into our bodies, chemistry, glands, nerves and things that enjoy some of these things. Of course, the problem is that our bodies are stupid.

We have to have a brain to guide them. We have to have a soul that determines what we will and will not allow our bodies to do. Our bodies are really like animals and they'll just follow their cravings.

And because of that, what the body finds enjoyable, it often wishes to indulge in at inappropriate times in inappropriate ways. It just has desires. The body is undiscerning.

That's why the body must be governed. Paul said, I keep my body in subjection over in 1 Corinthians chapter nine. He says in verse 27.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection. Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9 27.

Paul said, I have to bring my body into subjection to me. Why? Because the body, which is a blessing and which is capable of enjoying the good things God has given, is also capable of seeking those pleasures outside of the perimeters that God had intended for them. And therefore, a desire for food and enjoyment of drink and enjoyment of sleep and enjoyment of sex, all of which are things God designed to be enjoyed in their proper place, can also at times be enjoyed too much in their wrong place.

And so our the world and its desires, the lusts of the flesh, the desires of the body become an avenue of entrapment for the believer and for people who aren't believers to the differences that unbelievers don't have as much concern about whether they're trapped in those things or not, because they, as Paul put in Ephesians chapter four, before we were Christians, we walked according to the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Just want to just point this out to you before we get into the specifics of Proverbs in Ephesians four, excuse me, Ephesians two, I'm thinking of a verse here. It says in Ephesians two verses two and three.

In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince

of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves, meaning before we were Christians, we also walked according to the course of the world and according to the prince of the power of the air who still is working in the sons of disobedience. We are not the sons of disobedience anymore, but we once were. We were like them at one time, among whom we also all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

And we were by nature children of wrath, just as others. So when we were not Christians, we walked according to the course of the world and we were thus fulfilling at that time the desires of our flesh and of our minds. Now, that's an important thing to note, because what he's saying is in those days when we did what our flesh wanted, we were doing what our mind wanted to.

The desires of our flesh and the desires of our mind were on the same page. But if you look over at Romans chapter seven. Paul thinks about the conflict that the Christian now has, because the Christian now does not with their mind want to sin, but with the flesh, the flesh still wants to.

And he says in Romans 7, 19. For what the good I will to do, I do not do, but the evil I will not to do that I practice now, if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find that a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good, for I delight in the law of God, according to the inward man.

But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. He says there's two sets of desires. Now there's the law of my mind.

That's which I desire in my inward man, which is what it agrees with the law of God. I delight in the law of God. According to my inward man, the law that my mind embraces is the law of holiness and righteousness and agrees with God's law now, because why I'm a Christian, I've repented, I've changed my mind.

You see, back when I sinned as an unbeliever, I was fulfilling the desires of my flesh. True. But it was also the fulfillment of the desires of my mind.

My mind proved, but I've changed my mind. What I haven't changed is my flesh. Repentance is a change of mind, but it is not a change of your flesh.

You don't change that until the resurrection. And so what we now have is a conflict that did not exist before. As a non-Christian, a person can live according to the desires of their flesh, and they're not in conflict with their mind.

Their mind agrees with it. When you become a Christian, change your mind. You now say, OK, I now agree with the law of God that that's good.

My the law in my flesh, the principle drawing me through my fleshly desires, that's in contrast to it. So I'm now experiencing a conflict between two sets of desires, that which my mind embraces, which is the law of God, and that which my flesh has always embraced, which is the desire just to please itself. And so this is the conflict.

Solomon assumes his son is going to be virtuous enough to want to do the right thing. Although that's not always a given, because we don't know if Solomon's sons were good people or not. Some of them were not.

And Solomon at times was not, although he sometimes was. He wanted to do the right thing. But wanting to do the right thing and actually carrying it out are two different things because there is another set of desires.

The Christian doesn't want to sin, or does he? Well, part of the Christian wants to sin and the other part doesn't. Actually, the Christian doesn't want to sin, but the flesh wants to indulge because the flesh is undiscerning. The flesh just has desires.

It's just like a machine. It's a machine that's built to have certain appetites. And those appetites are to be governed by another part of us.

Our body can't govern itself. We have to govern our bodies. And therefore, the desires of the flesh are one of the categories in which the world seeks to draw us away.

And so the principal desires of the flesh or the body that become troublesome are that of food, of drink, of sleep, and of sex. Those are all things that the body enjoys. It's made to enjoy them.

But it is also, they're all things that if they are not properly governed, they lead into sin. And sin has bad consequences. In James it says, Let no man say when he sins that he is tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he tempt any man. But he says, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts, his own desires draw him away. And he says, Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin.

And sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. That's what James says in the first chapter of James, which I had not planned to use, so I didn't get the verses down here. But that's James 1, verses 13 through 15.

So James says that a man is drawn away by his lusts. That just means his desires. Desires are not in themselves wrong.

We think of the word lust strictly in terms of sinful desire, but actually lust is a generic term in the Bible for desires. They can be good desires or bad desires. In fact, the same desires can be good in one circumstance and bad in another circumstance.

The desire to eat is good when you're supposed to eat. It's bad when you've had too much to eat or when you're supposed to be fasting or something else. There are times when you ought not to eat more, but you may still desire to.

Therefore, the same desire that is good at one time is can lead you into sin at another time. And James said, We are tempted who are drawn away by our desires. And he says, When those desires, when that lust conceives, it brings forth sin.

That means the lust is there before the sin is. And we need to be careful not to mistake lust for sin. And people don't understand that because Jesus said, Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her is committing adultery in his heart.

Therefore, lust in our mind is always associated with evil and adultery. But what he's saying is, If you look at a woman in order to desire her, and the assumption is she's not your woman. She's somebody else's woman.

She is a married woman in all likelihood because the sin in the mind is adultery, not fornication. Such a desire would not be adultery if she's an unmarried woman. It would still be inappropriate.

But he's thinking it's somebody else's woman and you're desiring somebody else's woman. If you look at a woman in order to desire her for yourself, then you are committing an act of sin in your heart. It doesn't say that if you spontaneously, without wishing to, feel a sense of desire that you've committed adultery.

That sense of desire is temptation. And Jesus was tempted at all points as we are yet without sin. Temptation and sin are not the same thing.

Lust, when it conceives, brings forth sin. What causes lust to conceive? At what point does a desire conceive and become sin? Well, as soon as you approve of it. You see, desires will come to you undidden.

The devil himself will put evil suggestions in your mind and arouse interest in that which is evil. An interest in what is evil, a desire for what is evil, is a temptation. As soon as your heart approves of it, it becomes a sin.

If there is a mental image that the enemy keeps putting into your head and you hate it and you don't want it and you're resisting it, the longer it stays in your head, the longer it is that you're probably going to feel like you've somehow violated some law of God and you've sinned. You're going to start feeling defiled because you have this ongoing temptation. But it's only when it conceives that it brings forth sin.

And that is as soon as you stop fighting it, as soon as you decide that you agree with it, as soon as it is what you want and what your will chooses. It may be that you'll never act upon it, but if you decide to enjoy the temptation instead of resist the temptation, then it

has become a sin to you. The lust has conceived and brought forth sin.

And he says, then sin, when it is finished, at its end, it produces death. So death is the result of allowing one's own bodily appetites to govern unrestrained. And so Solomon warns his son about all these things.

Now, some of these things he only speaks a little bit about. But the point is, he is aware that these appetites exist and need to be governed. For example, in the matter of food.

In Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 17, it says, he who loves pleasure will be a poor man and he who loves wine and oil will not be rich. Now, this is talking about the financial consequences of not restraining your appetites. If you love pleasure, and in this case he speaks of wine and oil.

Now, if he had only said wine, we would put this under the next category, which would be alcohol abuse. And certainly this verse belongs to that category too. But the reference to oil obviously is referring to not something merely, not merely a craving for alcohol.

And probably it's a reference to oil that's consumed, probably fat of meat, you know, opulent, luxurious diet is probably what he has in mind. So when he says, he who loves pleasure, he's not speaking specifically of, you know, maybe illicit pleasures in themselves, but just pleasure is a good thing. The devil is not the creator of pleasure, by the way.

God is the creator of pleasure. Sometimes we think the devil, you know, he's the one who wants us to have pleasure and God wants to restrict our pleasure. The Bible says, in God's presence are pleasures forevermore.

Pleasure is God's invention. The devil uses it and twists it and exploits it to try to get us to go the wrong direction in seeking to idolize pleasure. But God wants us to be pleased.

He wants us to have pleasure. That's what he's made us to do, to enjoy the things he's given us, but enjoy them in a legitimate way. And a person who loves pleasure, who places pleasure as their primary goal, obviously is going to be overindulgent in areas they should not be.

A person who loves oil and wine probably is not so much referring to drunkenness as referring to feasting, because wine was at every table. And probably referring to gluttony more than anything. That is to say, if a person is, sets their affections on satisfying their desires for food or for anything else.

Now, it's entirely possible to enjoy food and not have that be the thing that's always on your mind. And I had some friends, I knew that every time I was with them, if you go on a drive across town or spend any time with them at all, sitting in the car, they're going to



be talking about food. They're going to be remembering that little restaurant they went to 20 years ago that had just the most wonderful apple pie.

You know, the best anywhere. And they're always just reminiscing about food and thinking about what they're going to eat next. And it always seems strange to me.

I mean, I enjoy food too. I can remember some meals I really enjoyed. Although, when they're in the past, I don't really enjoy them in retrospect.

I mean, they don't keep coming up that long. But some people just, you know, their focus is on their palate and their feeding. These certainly would be people who love food and wine.

Enjoying it is one thing, but to set your heart on it, to love pleasure and to seek pleasure as a value, is a mistake. And it'll lead to poverty, he says. It'll lead to other problems too, like obesity and other issues.

Maybe heart failure eventually. But the first place it's going to hit you is in your pocketbook. Because if you love pleasure, you can always get more by spending more.

And if you don't have any restraint, you'll end up spending all your money on that kind of thing. In chapter 23, we've already seen these verses, but they now come up again under this heading. Verses one through three.

When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you and put a knife to your throat. If you're a man given to appetite, do not desire his delicacies for they are deceptive food. Now, there are times when a person could be lured into a trap by food.

People who love food will go to a feast because they're invited, even if perhaps the host is there to get something out of them, and that they might be less inclined to surrender without the meal as a bribe. And he says, if a ruler invites you to eat, generally he has something he wants from you. And the same is true of the miser, who is mentioned down in verse six.

Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies. So, it says in verse three, don't desire the delicacies of a ruler. Don't desire the delicacies of a miser.

In verse six, the idea is that these people, they may be luring you into some kind of proposition, business proposition or something that they suspect you would otherwise not be interested in, but they're fattening you up for the kill, so to speak. And you need to be wary of that. And don't just say, wow, look at all this great food and just kind of dive in and lose yourself in it.

Put a knife to your throat, exercise restraint. For one thing, in the presence of a ruler,

you'll earn more respect if you show yourself to be a person who can control your appetite than if you just kind of dive in because it's all there. Somebody who's a slave of food is somebody who can be controlled by people, you know, who can keep feeding you those kinds of foods.

An example of somebody who observed this principle well was Daniel. Daniel was taken into Babylon where he was given the opportunity to eat the delicacies of the king's foods. However, he recognized that some of the things that the king served were not good for him as a Jewish man to eat.

Some of them were unclean. Probably the blood had not been drained properly out of the meats and probably there was some pork at the table and some seafoods that were on the list of unclean foods. They might be desirable, but Daniel said he didn't want them.

Because it was a compromise for him. Now, we don't have any foods that we're not allowed to eat. I mean, there's no foods on a list of unclean foods for us.

We just saw that a moment ago in First Timothy. First Timothy chapter four, where he said, Every creature of God is good and nothing is to be refused if it's received with thanksgiving. There are no unclean foods, but there certainly are times when we ought not to eat.

There are times when the foods we would choose, although not unlawful, they're not expedient. All things are lawful to me, Paul said, but not all things are expedient. And he was talking about foods in that context in First Corinthians.

So there are times when food is available, but it's not wise to just indulge in it. Perhaps because you've become aware that you have a heart condition and you need to avoid certain kinds of foods, the ones that you like best. You may have just found out that your overall health is impaired by overeating and you need to get your weight down.

You may be a person who is fasting and has a desire for food. And you have desire for food as much when you're fasting as other times, maybe more so. And so these are times when you have to be able to be a person who, if you're a person given to appetite, you need to be able to put the knife to your throat, as it were.

That is, bring your throat under your control, your palate too. Chapter 25 and verse 16 says, Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit. And there's a similar proverb in the same chapter in verse 27, the first part of it anyway, it is not good to eat much honey.

Now, honey is good. The Bible always says honey is good. And it is always given as the emblem of that which is pleasant to the palate.

It's like symbolic of whatever is pleasing to the tastes. And so David, for example, uses

honey as an example of that which is pleasing to the flesh when he says that the words of God are more to be desired than gold and sweeter than honey in the honeycomb. Money and honey.

Gold and honey represent, of course, two of the main motivators of man. The desire to get rich and the desire to please his senses, his palate. And so honey becomes an emblem of all things that are pleasant.

And it says, if you have found honey, eat a reasonable amount. But don't eat more than a reasonable amount. You may actually end up vomiting it up.

And this is perhaps literally true, but he's not speaking only of one thing. Remember, I said in our introduction of Proverbs many, many sessions ago that some of these some of these proverbs are pregnant observations that have a much wider application than just what they say in so many words, because this would be true of anything pleasurable. Everything pleasurable has its proper use.

There's always a proper amount of consumption, a proper amount of exercise of certain activities that are pleasurable and an improper degree. If a little bit of salt is good, it doesn't mean that a barrel full of salt is good on your food. Obviously, there's things that are good in moderation that cease to be good and become unwholesome when you have too much of it, when something becomes your obsession, when something becomes demands, takes up more of your time, more of your interest, more of your money than it should.

A moderate amount of pleasurable activity is exactly what God has in mind for us. But of course, when someone becomes a slave of pleasure, a slave of their food or a slave of any kind of lust, then, of course, it's something that they may find themselves vomiting over at a later date. In chapter 30, in verse 22, actually, this begins in verse 21.

It says, for three things, the earth is perturbed. Yes, for four, it cannot bear up for a servant when he reigns, for a fool when he's filled with food, a hated woman or a hateful woman when she is married and a maidservant who succeeds her mistress. The reference to a fool when he's filled with food suggests that when a man is filled with food, and often with wine at the same table, he feels fat and sassy, frankly.

He feels satisfied and jovial, and if he's a fool, his mouth is going to run in ways that it may not at other times. There is an observation here that a full belly will have a tendency to loosen a man up. He feels satisfied.

He feels comfortable. The Bible indicates that hunger is something that humbles a person. That's what God said in Deuteronomy chapter 8. He said that he, in the wilderness, when the children of Israel were there, and he was just given the man, he says, I humbled you with hunger.

And when a person is hungry, he's more humble. When he's full, he's more confident, satisfied, and so forth. Now, we may never have been hungry enough to ever have experimented with this, unless you fasted or something like that.

If you fast, then you've gotten hungry. But in our society, we rarely really get hungry. We don't allow ourselves to get very hungry.

And so we may have not seen that this effect is there, but the Bible recognizes it, that a man who's hungry is prone to recognize his vulnerability, think more lowly of himself, be a more humble man. When he's full, he feels like he's immortal, that he can take on the world. He's just kind of, he's satisfied at the moment and feels that, you know, he's, I don't know, it just loosens his tongue.

It loosens his pride. If he's a fool and he's sated with food, that's something, he says, that perturbs the very earth itself. So food has an effect on the mood, obviously.

You know very well, if you have fasted, that you have to strive against irritability. I remember a man said he was raised in a Christian home. His father used to fast on Thursdays, and the kids would just kind of have to avoid him.

When he got home from work, he was always grumpy and he was always, you know, irritable. And the guy said his dad would always walk over and touch the TV to see if it was warm, to see if anyone had been watching TV and having fun, because he was fasting, no one's supposed to be having any fun. And he was, you know, just irritable.

And that's how people sometimes are when they're hungry. When they get full, they're happier. And once they're happy, if they're fools, they're proud and they need to watch out for what they will be saying.

They may make a fool of themselves more readily. Okay, now, of course, there's also a number of things the Proverbs tell us about alcohol. And what is true of alcohol is true of many other substances, in that they do alter the consciousness.

Jesus said it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him. It's what comes out of his heart that defiles him. However, some things you put in your mouth can affect your heart.

When Jesus was talking about it, it doesn't matter if you wash your hands properly before you eat, it's not going to morally defile you, as there are not foods that you can eat that morally defile you. But there certainly are substances which either take in, ingested as, you know, as drink or as food or, you know, injected with a needle into the arm or in any other way. Once the substances get into your bloodstream, they alter your consciousness and therefore they do have an impact on your soul and on your moral behavior.

And the Bible is very much aware of that, although it doesn't ever talk about things like heroin or cocaine or things, although heroin was known in some parts of the world in those days. I don't think it was probably known in Israel. I don't think they had marijuana or hashish in Israel.

They might have, but I don't think they did because it's never ever mentioned in the scripture. But they did have alcohol. All societies have always had alcohol.

And what is true of alcohol in many respects is true of other drugs that will alter the consciousness. And the problem with alcohol is when it alters the consciousness. Alcohol is not treated in the Bible as an evil in itself.

It is not something that's always wrong. In fact, it is something that even Proverbs indicates may have some positive uses, medicinal uses. Even Paul indicated that alcohol can have a medicinal value.

As he told Timothy, drink no longer only water, but take a little wine with it for your stomach sake and for your frequent infirmities. So, alcohol is not itself a bad thing. God made alcohol for a purpose.

And one of the purposes appears to be to gladden the heart. And you'd say, well, that's consciousness alteration. Well, there seems to be a fine line between just being relaxed and being over the edge where your perception and your moral judgment and so forth are altered.

I don't think anyone has to drink alcohol. And I've lived most of my life not drinking much because I don't, frankly, I just don't care for it that much. There's never been anything that alcohol can do for me that I wanted it to do.

I've never had an interest in altering my consciousness with either alcohol or drugs or anything else. I can't imagine why people would want to do that. Some people enjoy wine and beer and so forth entirely innocently.

There's nothing wrong with having a moderate amount of alcohol. And in some cases, it may even have health benefits. And a person shouldn't think that it's morally wrong for them to have a glass of wine or something.

But there is a line somewhere, and I have not experimented with it much to find out where it is. But there is a line where a little too much is way too much, where a little less wasn't. There have been twice that I've had a little too much alcohol in my life.

And neither time was it intentional because I've never had the slightest interest in altering my consciousness. And when it was, it was an extremely unpleasant awareness for me. There was once when I was with a bunch of Christians before church on Sunday morning in Santa Cruz, there was a restaurant that on Sunday mornings had champagne

breakfast.

All you could drink champagne with any breakfast. So I was the head of a Christian community house. We all went out for champagne breakfast before church.

And they filled your glass before they brought the menu. Not to me, champagne, I never really drank it much. It tastes like stuffing up to me.

By the time they came to take my order, they filled my glass again. By the time they brought my food, they filled my glass again. I wasn't feeling it.

I mean, in our conversation, I felt totally normal and stuff. But when we stood up to leave and go to church, I felt it. It is the first time I'd ever felt alcohol in my head at all.

I had drunk a beer or two at times. I'd had a glass of wine before, but I had never had three glasses of champagne on an empty stomach before. Nor was I aware that it had any, I was not aware of any effect whatsoever until I stood up and I said, oh, no, this is what alcohol, I guess, does to people.

And it was an extremely unpleasant awareness. I thought, man, I can't imagine anyone wanting to do this to themselves on purpose. I thought, I don't feel like I'm in complete control, like I want to be.

It was not fun. It was nothing. I thought, people do this for fun? People hit themselves on the head with a hammer for fun? I can't even imagine it.

And I was praying. And by the time I got to church, it had gone. I mean, I just had gotten a little over the edge, enough to know it was there.

And fortunately, it wore off within about 15 minutes. But boy, I thought, I don't ever want to do that again. And I didn't on purpose.

But there was a time when I was in Mexico a few years later with a guy, a friend of mine, Christian guy. We had a couple of tacos and we were in Tijuana and had some little taqueria there. And we had a couple of beers with it.

Usually in America, a couple of beers doesn't do anything to me at all. I don't like beer very much, but when I drink them, it's never really affected me. Because I don't drink much.

But we did have two beers there, which is, again, generally speaking, that had two beers had never been too much for me before. But I was told later that in Mexico, they have a different standard of alcohol content than here. And I guess the beers were stronger, because again, when I was talking to my friend over lunch, I didn't feel affected at all.

But as soon as I started to leave, it was the exact same thing. I felt exactly the same

way. I thought, oh, that again.

And again, it was extremely unpleasant. I just felt totally like, I wish I could just, you know, do nothing and let this thing wear off. And I don't even want to walk down the street.

I wasn't stumbling. I mean, I was just a little bit lightheaded. I just did not like it.

And once again, as I recall, it was like 15, 20 minutes later, I was normal. Couldn't feel it anymore. So I must have been just over the edge.

So I actually haven't experimented much to see how much alcohol puts you over the edge. But I got a feeling if it was just a little less, it wouldn't have been there at all. I mean, it wouldn't have felt anything at all.

So there is a level where people can drink alcohol and it's entirely harmless. And one could even argue that the amount I drank at that time was harmless. I wouldn't describe myself as a stumbling drunk at that time.

But it affected the mind or the head, the perception enough that it was extremely unpleasant. And yet some people, I guess that's what they want. They like to do the brain damage to themselves.

The brain damage is what they enjoy. And that is something, I guess, once you get to the place where you like it, it's some people find it hard to not want it all the time. And that's true with drugs also.

I guess some people just aren't happy with their lives, aren't happy with reality. And they like to alter their perception of reality so that they can enjoy it more. I frankly have had some unhappy things in my life.

Reality hasn't always been pleasant for me. But it's never been as unpleasant as it would be if I tried to, you know, improve it with alcohol or drugs. It's never occurred to me that that would make things any better, thankfully.

But some do. And especially we have to realize that in an ancient world, people drank wine at every meal. They pretty much had to because the water was not safe.

And they mixed wine with their water. It was not common at meals to drink wine straight. This we know from the writings of the people of that period.

We know from the Jewish writers in the Talmud. They talked about this. The Latin and the Greek writers of the first and second centuries talked about this.

The table customs. People would have wine at the table and they would mix it with water. Usually at least two or three parts water to one part wine.

This was to make the water safe. And so when they drank wine, it was seldom unmixed. Now once in a while they drink wine unmixed.

But it is often mentioned specifically that they drink the wine unmixed. And that was usually to get drunk. But there was always wine at the table.

Children drank wine. They had to. The water would not be safe to drink without the wine in it.

So people developed a taste for wine. It was always available. And some people just got to a place where they liked to drink it more than others.

Or more than they needed. And therefore, as in all societies, there were people who were addicted to wine. And what is said about addiction to wine can be said to be true of addiction to anything chemical that you put in your body that changes your mind.

Changes your consciousness. In chapter 20 and verse 1, a proverb says, Wine is a mocker. Intoxicating drink arouses brawling.

And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. You can be led astray by alcohol. Because you do mess with your moral judgment when you drink too much.

When you put anything in your brain chemically that will interfere with your ordinary judgment, you take the risk of, well, let's just put it this way. Even when you're sober, it's hard enough to make wise judgments. To know where to stop in some kind of activity or to know what to, in purchasing things or in almost any kind of activity, you need all your wits about you to avoid making mistakes.

And as soon as you impair yourself in any measure, you're setting yourself up to make more mistakes, being led astray into any kind of wrong behavior. Because wine, you know, you think it's serving you, but it's mocking you. Wine is a mocker.

It arouses brawling. That is people getting into fights more easily. That's because they can't discern as easily what's a slight offense and what's a big offense.

People just lose their judgment the more they come under the influence of alcohol. In chapter 21, in verse 17, we already saw, he who loves pleasure will be a poor man, he who loves wine and oil will not be rich. I mentioned, I think this has more to do with feasting than drunkenness, but a person who loves wine, it doesn't love them back.

Some people love wine, but wine mocks them. And one of the things it does is it takes their money away from them. And I can think of a lot better things I'd like to take my money from me than wine.

There's good things to do with money. Doing brain damage to myself chemically is not one of the things I really want to pay for. And lots of people who have become addicted



to alcohol obviously have ruined their family's finances and have become derelicts on the street and homeless and so forth because it costs everything they have to keep their habit up.

When it comes to other drugs that people are into besides alcohol, drugs like heroin, a lot of times people have habits that cost them hundreds of dollars a day, if not more, and they end up having to steal or do something else or deal drugs themselves in order to cover their habit. It's expensive. Once you begin to live for certain kinds of fleshly pleasures, there's really no upper limit.

Where you can say, OK, that's enough. And therefore, it can take all your money before you know it. And Chapter 23, verses 29 through 35, we have the most extensive passage in Proverbs about the dangers and the effects of alcohol.

He says, Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly. At the last, it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.

Your eyes will see strange things and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you'll be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying, They have struck me, but I was not hurt. They've beaten me and I did not feel it.

When shall I awake that I may seek another drink? So this is the true description of an addict, somebody whose life is ruined with alcohol. He's damaging himself. He's getting himself beat up.

He wakes up with bruises all over him, but he doesn't know where they came from. He wakes up with new tattoos. He doesn't know where they came from.

You know, he's not in control because of wine or because of his alcoholism. He sees strange things. He begins to hallucinate, probably when he has DTs, and he utters, his heart utters perverse things.

Now, here's the real danger is that your heart begins to become more perverse. Your heart begins to make suggestions that are more perverse because of alcohol. Alcohol affects your moral judgment.

And when I say alcohol, I mean abuse of alcohol. Moderate use of alcohol does not necessarily affect your moral judgment, but abuse of alcohol does. This person is described as one who is obviously abusing alcohol.

He's feeling no pain when he's getting beat up, when he's struck. He's dizzy. He's like a man at the top of the mast of a ship bobbing around.

He's not in a desirable situation, and yet he doesn't know it or doesn't care. He just wants more of it because it's got to hold him. He's in bondage to it.

In chapter 31, King Lemuel's mother warns him about the dangers of alcohol. And she says in verse four and four through seven, really, she says, It's not for kings, O Lemuel, it's not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink, lest they drink and forget the law and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing and wine to those who are bitter of heart.

Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his misery no more. As hard as it is for many Christians to deal with, this is actually recommending wine as something to cheer up somebody who's on their deathbed. No doubt it's referring to wine's value as an anesthesia.

Most of us do not turn down anesthesia when we have a surgery. And in the days before, there were the kinds of anesthesia that we have now, which are much more effective than the older kind. If a person had to have surgical procedures, they'd just give them a lot of vodka and get them drunk, and that would help.

That would help them not feel the pain. Now, ordinarily, drunkenness is not a right way to go as a way of life. If it's for the sake of anesthetizing, excruciating pain in a necessary situation, then I don't suppose getting drunk in that situation is much different than being put under with sodium pentothal or any other kind of anesthesia.

Anesthesia, by definition, alters your consciousness. It alters your threshold for endurance of pain. And that's not habitual.

If you start using prescription drugs on a recreational basis, then you're abusing. But there are times when taking an aspirin, it does change the brain chemistry in some way so that you don't feel the pain, although the cause of the pain is still there. It's altering your consciousness of it.

But none of us have any problem with an aspirin, and some of us would take much stronger anesthesia if there was actual surgery being done. In the old days, they only had alcohol for that, and they used it for that. And apparently, in Proverbs, it suggests that's not really an abuse of it.

It may be even the very reason that God created it. Yes, God created alcohol. So people say, well, Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding, and it was alcoholic, and people got drunk.

And Jesus is responsible for their drunkenness. You might as well say that God's responsible for everyone's drunkenness because he invented wine. God made it for a good purpose.

If people abuse it, that's their problem. But what was that good purpose? Obviously, alcohol can disinfect things. Probably it has a value in that respect.

But the Bible always acknowledges its value as gladdening the heart of man. And in this case, it mentions that a person who's afflicted, perishing, bitter of heart. This doesn't just mean people who are depressed should get drunk, but it means people who are in serious pain and perhaps dying, that to deaden their pain is perhaps a legitimate use of an anesthesia, of which alcohol is the only one they had.

But recreational use of alcohol is dangerous, and kings ought to avoid it, she said. This is the mother of a king talking. She says, not for kings to be drinking this intoxicating drink.

That would muddle their judgment. And a king must have good judgment, and so must a Christian, because Christians are to judge the world too. And the Bible says, that's what Paul said, do you not know that the saints will judge the world? We're even going to judge angels.

And we have to make judgments of lesser things in this life, Paul said. And it's always necessary for us to be able to judge between right and wrong, wise and foolish, between the justice and injustice of a person's cause. We have to make right judgments, and therefore we must avoid anything that would in any way hinder us from being correct in our judgments about things.

And thus alcohol, and not only alcohol, but frankly any chemical, because alcohol is a chemical, any chemical that you put into your body that would have a diminishing effect on one's control over their normal rational processes is something that must be avoided by anyone who values their judgment, that is their sense of right and wrong. And to mess with your brain chemistry, to mess with your brain cells, just for fun, because some people apparently find it fun, is simply to love pleasure, and to not love God and righteousness. And so he warns against the loving of pleasure, and the loving of wine and oil.

And food, as there is nothing wrong with food, but gluttony is wrong. So there is nothing wrong with wine, but drunkenness is wrong. God has made good things to enjoy, food and wine among them, but both can be abused, and they are abused exactly in proportion as they are given prominent place in our values.

That we think that what we eat is going to be what's important, or drinking becomes something that's a value. These things should be subservient to our spiritual interests, and our spiritual interests should be everything. That is, whatever we do, Paul says, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.

He said that in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and I believe it's verse 31, it's not verse 30. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31. Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all

to the glory of God.

So eating can be done to the glory of God, and drinking can be done to the glory of God. And both of these things can be done in excess and inappropriately, and not bring glory to God. And we would see this more clearly, perhaps, in the drinking area than in eating.

Although it's obvious that if we are uncontrolled in our eating, it'll show. And it may be that unbelievers will not glorify God if we look like people who are out of control. If we look like people whose appetites are controlling us, it is not glorifying to God.

It's not a good testimony. So, put a knife to your throat if you're one who's given to appetite, and if you're one who's given to drink, probably just stay away from it altogether. And there are other appetites that we must talk about, and we'll talk about those separately on another occasion.