

# The American Issue

October 31, 2012

## *Alcohol: Juggling with Life's Many Daggers*

By Dr. Mark H. Creech

A man was pulled over by a police officer for speeding. As the officer was explaining to the driver that he was breaking the speed limit, the officer noticed several large daggers in the backseat. "What are you doing with those daggers?" he asked suspiciously. "I'm a juggler," said the man. "I need those daggers for my act."

Still suspicious, the officer requested, "Well, show me." So the juggler reached for the daggers and started juggling them. He stood in front of his car juggling six daggers at one time – overhand, underhand, behind the back. He was putting on quite a show for the amazed officer.

While he was performing, another car whizzed by. The driver couldn't help but do a double take and then said, "I'm not ever drinking again for the rest of my life! I could never pass these new sobriety tests!"

Drinking alcohol today is a commonly accepted way of life, despite the fact that it has become the accepted killer of our time. Alcohol is a drug that claims more addicts than any other drug in America. Alcoholics outnumber drug addicts ten to one, and alcoholic deaths outnumber drug overdoses three to one. Alcohol causes more deaths than AIDS, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and crack combined.

Still, Christians differ on the role of alcohol in society. Drunkenness is universally condemned among the followers of Christ, but social drinking is not. Many Christians will claim they have been saved by grace and living with a principle of total abstinence constitutes a form of legalism that somehow negates the fact that they are redeemed by grace.

But grace is not a license for the abuse of Christian liberty. Christian liberty should take into account a number of factors such as (1) Will my actions honor and please the Lord? (2) Is my position on the matter in question a sound one? (3) What are the associations of the act in question? (4) How could the act affect others?

Abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages is clearly a sound position for any earnest Christian. There may be much debate over what the Scriptures actually say about the nature of alcohol, its use and abuses. Nevertheless, there is no debate over the fact that God required abstinence for those in closest relationship to Him. Leviticus 10:9 forbids the use of wine to priests who ministered in the Tabernacle. Wine was also forbidden to those under special vows, like John the Baptist, who was a Nazarite (Numbers 6:3).

Should a New Testament follower of the Lord be less holy than those separated unto God in Old Testament times? Hardly! The apostle Peter argued, "[A]s the One who called you is holy, so you yourselves should be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

The apostle Paul wrote, "Let us behave ourselves decently as befits the daytime, not in carousing and drinking, not in immorality and debauchery... Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; *do not make provision for the flesh to gratify its cravings*" (Romans 13:13-14 – authors italics).

Certainly the Lord is honored and pleased with the child of God who endeavors to live a holy life and seeks to leave no open door for something that could feed and gratify carnal drives that lead to spiritual missteps or physical mishaps.

Is there something good and uplifting about alcohol – something that helps one, as well as others draw nearer to God? Hardly! Although in recent years the alcohol industry has contributed some of its proceeds to many noble causes, it has overwhelmingly been the partner of excess and evil of every form.

How can a Christian drink without making, at the least, an implied endorsement of such a wicked enterprise? The Scriptures ask, "[W]hat association is there between light and darkness? Or what harmony is there between Christ and Belial.." (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Social drinking is at best an act of appeasement, an act of compromise, a declaration of "détente" with a societal scourge that is responsible for the destruction of millions of lives. For the sake of others who may be weak in this area, it's important for Christians to avoid being a hindrance. Romans 14:21 instructs, "It is well to eat no meat and drink no wine, to do nothing that would make your brother to stumble."

Of course, many well-meaning folks will argue that there wouldn't be any problems from alcohol use if people would simply drink responsibly. "Moderation in all things," they claim.

But moderation isn't the answer because with every stated benefit named in favor of the use of alcohol in moderation there is another risk to counter it. Studies by the *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism* show that there are still significant risks with moderation, higher risks of strokes for many, a higher risk of birth defects and cancer for women, harmful interactions with medications, some of which are simply over the counter drugs. This is just to mention a few of the risks.

Rev. James B. Dunn, once wisely wrote in a poem,

*What is Drunkenness?*

Darkness.

*What is Moderation?*

Twilight.

*What is Total Abstinence?*

Midday.

*What is Drunkenness?*

Slavery.

*What is Moderation?*

A chain.

*What is Total Abstinence?*

The power which breaks the chain and sets the captive free.

*What is Drunkenness?*

A fire.

*What is Moderation?*

That which kindles it.

*What is Total Abstinence?*

That which puts it out.

*What is Drunkenness?*

Death.

*What is Moderation?*

The way to it.

*What is Total Abstinence?*

Life.

*What is Drunkenness?*

Ruin.

*What is Moderation?*

Danger.

*What is Total Abstinence?*

Safety.

If the Christian would be safe in his relationship to God, if the Christian would lead others to safety by the testimony of his lifestyle, if the Christian would safeguard his health, then the Christian ought to totally abstain from the use of alcohol.

To do otherwise is like juggling with life's many daggers while drinking. It just doesn't meet the test of a life lived most wisely.

**Brennan: More restraint on alcohol in MLB celebrations**

Christine Brennan, USA TODAY SportsShare

<http://www.usatoday.com>

October 3, 2012 - It's the season to celebrate in Major League Baseball, which means it has been a very good week for the champagne industry. The beer companies, too.

Whenever a baseball team earned a postseason berth -- and there are more spots to win this season than ever -- the clubhouse instantly turned into a college fraternity party. Beer and champagne flowed over players' heads and gushed into and out of their mouths. This all-American celebratory tableau was enhanced, in its own silly way, when the players strapped on goggles and even snorkels, ostensibly to protect their eyes. Lucky us, we didn't have to miss a moment of the raucous happiness because TV cameras were there to beam it into every household that cared to watch.

Baseball is best known for these celebrations, but they occur throughout sports. Moët & Chandon would have had to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for the product placement it received worldwide in print and TV and online thanks to the massive party the European Ryder Cup team spontaneously threw Sunday at Medinah Country Club.

Those of us who love sports have grown up with these celebrations. We laugh at them and don't give them another thought. But what if we did?

What if we really spent some time wondering what it means to Detroit Tigers superstar Miguel Cabrera -- with his past issues of alcohol abuse, including a highly-publicized DUI -- to have to move from room to room in the clubhouse, according to Yahoo Sports, to avoid his guzzling teammates celebrating their American League Central title with both alcoholic and non-alcoholic champagne? And just when he thinks he's avoided it all, his wife shows up with a bottle of Dom Perignon, and someone takes a picture of the two of them. Of all the questions we might ask, the one that immediately comes to mind is what in the world was Mrs. Cabrera thinking?

Or, what about Josh Hamilton? He has been through quite a few celebrations with the Texas Rangers, who, mindful of his problems with alcohol and drug addiction, have doused him with ginger ale in a move praised by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Nonetheless, this can't be easy for him, not now, not ever.

Or we could ask about this: One of the Nationals celebrating Washington's first postseason baseball appearance since 1933 was 19-year-old Bryce Harper, a Mormon who says he doesn't drink alcohol. On Monday night, Harper was spotted hanging out with first baseman Adam LaRoche's 9-year-old son Drake in a corner of the Nats' clubhouse, celebrating with apple cider. "I was drinking that," Harper told *The Washington Post*. "Me and Drake were pouring that on top of each other."

How could anyone imagine the scene of the two of them together, the baseball player and the boy, and not wish Norman Rockwell were still around to paint it?

But Harper also was pictured on the Nationals' official Instagram page with a beer in hand while a group of teammates doused general manager Mike Rizzo. At least one other photo of Harper holding a Miller Lite and spraying it on teammates made it to Twitter. Some might see this as a little thing, or nothing at all, but not MLB.

"While we acknowledge that clubhouse celebrations are a tradition in our sport, clubs are reminded to ensure that they are closely regulated and confined to a controlled atmosphere overseen by club and/or MLB security," MLB spokesman Pat Courtney wrote in an email. "Guidelines are provided that address maximum amounts, inappropriate consumption and drinking responsibly. We understand it is traditional to use the products in a celebratory way for spraying, and clubs provide non-alcoholic beverages to their personnel in order to be sensitive to the circumstances of those who choose not to drink."

MADD was concerned as well. "When you have a mixed-age celebration, it's tremendously important that you make sure alcohol doesn't knowingly or unknowingly get into the hands of those under 21," said Nick Ellinger, MADD's vice president of strategic outreach. "We understand the situation can be incredibly difficult, but it's important for legal and health issues, and that would apply to any baseball clubhouse, or the house next door."

The stunning excess exhibited in these celebrations is perhaps the biggest problem of all. This isn't a matter of just popping a cork or two or 10; this is an all-out, binged-up, beer and champagne blast. It would be one thing if it were being done in private, but it's not. It's there for all of us to see, and it will repeat itself over and over again in the coming weeks. No one is going to put a stop to these celebrations, and no one should. Beer is just too important to baseball; it has been the lifeblood of the game's financial foundation for generations. But MLB should tell teams to rein it in a bit -- and definitely keep any teenager from holding anything stronger than apple cider.

**American Council on Alcohol Problems**  
2376 Lakeside Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244

**PURPOSE:** American Council on Alcohol Problems is the channel of cooperation through which state temperance organizations, national religious bodies and similar concerned groups and individuals in America can unite to deal with the problems caused by alcohol and other drugs.

ACAP provides the forum and the mechanism through which concerned persons can find common ground on alcohol and other drug problems and address these issues with a united voice. It is the successor organization to the American Temperance League and the Anti-Saloon League established in 1895. Membership of ACAP presently is made up of 30 local temperance organizations, 22 national Christian denominations, and other fraternal organizations that support ACAP's philosophy of abstinence.

(ACAP is classified by the IRS as a 501 (c)(3) tax-deductible charity.)

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**Study Finds Link Between School Bullies and Substance Use**

By Join Together Staff | March 9, 2012 |

Students who bully their classmates are more likely to use cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana, compared with their peers who aren't bullies, a new study suggests. "Our findings suggest that one deviant behavior may be related to another," lead author Kisha Radliff of Ohio State University said in a news release. "For example, youth who bully others might be more likely to also try substance use. The reverse could also be true in that youth who use substances might be more likely to bully others." Newswise reports the researchers did not find as strong a link between bullying victims and substance use. The researchers reviewed a survey of almost 75,000 students, which included questions on bullying and substance use. The survey found bullying was more common among middle school students than among high school students, and that substance use was more common among high schoolers.

Only 1.6 percent of middle school students not involved in bullying reported marijuana use, compared with 11.4 percent of bullies. Among high school students, 13.3 percent who were not involved in bullying used marijuana, compared with 31.7 percent of bullies. The study found similar results for alcohol and cigarettes.

"Many schools are mandating anti-bullying programs and policies, and we think they need to take this opportunity to address other forms of deviant behavior, such as substance use," Radliff said. "If we can intervene with bullies while they're in middle school, we may be able to help them before they start experimenting with substance use." The study appears in Addictive Behaviors



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