

The American Issue



No Way Out?

**When you're trapped in a difficult situation,
try these five keys to freedom!**

By Dr. Bill Day, Executive Director, ACAAP

A number of years ago, I walked into the intensive care unit at a Pittsburgh Presbyterian Hospital to say good-bye to my older son. He was dying from primary liver cancer. The words of his doctor, William Stagell, echoed in the back of my mind like thunder! "We have done everything we can do, there is no hope for improvement."

Life can be brutally unfair. When our souls are ravaged during times of grief and anguish, we all ask the "why" questions. For months after the death of my son I asked them in a thousand different ways – at times thoughtfully, at times in great anger, bitterness and self-pity. But I discovered a fresh perspective that led me to focus on a differing outlook. How do we begin life anew when relationships, hopes, finances or health are seized in the cruel jaws of suffering and sadness?

I do not know what experiences now grip you nor do I fully comprehend how you find a path beyond your situation when there seems to be no way out. In my personal experience I discovered five keys to freedom and renewal. Sure, faith is easy under sunny skies, when we are surrounded by family, loving friends, success and prosperity. But what does all that mean when storms rage, when what we've loved and believed is suddenly swept away?

You're free to have faith in God.

I remember discovering a penetrating insight: Now, faith is the turning of my dreams into deeds. It is entrusting my life upon unseen realities by relating my life to the principle that history is woven by a loving God's design. Knowing that my individual life is woven to God's design is the beginning of a mature, adult faith.

Faith is the God-shaped lens through which we filter and then interpret the events of life. It is through the eyes of faith that we find meaning to our circumstances. Faith gives us the vision to see hope and grace in the midst of the bitterest pain. It frees us to create content out of chaos, to change stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

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ACAAP is the successor to the American Temperance League and the Anti-Saloon League established in 1895. Membership is made up of state temperance organizations, national Christian denominations and other fraternal organizations that support ACAAP's philosophy of abstinence

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You're free to accept your circumstances.

People who choose faith can accept the difficult without bitterness. Because through the lens of trust we can see the transforming work of God that promises "all things work together for good for those who love God..."

Accepting your situation doesn't mean you enjoy it. It simple means putting a period after a finished sentence. Taking this step allows us the freedom to move on with living when the grieving has passed.

You're free to choose your response.

Transcendent freedom releases us from excuses and blame. It allows us to realize that everything may be taken away except one thing and that is my freedom to choose my response to what has happened to me. Nobody can take that away unless I permit.

You're free to act.

Do something to shake off the gloomy, suffocating shackles of meaninglessness in your life. Confined in the limitation of our circumstances, our freedom to act is usually limited. But some opportunity in some form is available. See it and seize it.

You're free to love.

There is enough pain and suffering in human existence to leave us wondering at times if life is anything more than a cruel joke. Sooner or later we all feel the biting sting of suffering's lash.

Perhaps you are now limited by painful circumstances such as a career demolished on the rocks of vicious gossip; a relationship sabotaged by betrayal; crumbling financial security; health crippled by disease; the loss of a loved one. You can say yes to acceptance even though you didn't deserve any of this. Say yes to the tough choices, even in the midst of loss. Say yes to action and love. In so doing you may well find the pathway to renewal and hope you never dreamed possible. ■

Heroin: A Major Health Pandemic

By Ed Wolkin, President, ACAAP

Unless you have been sitting someplace with your head buried in the sand, you must realize that this country is facing a major health pandemic. Never before has addiction found its evil way into so many lives.

It used to be that some teenagers started partying with alcohol which soon led to experimentation with marijuana and on to heroin. Today, people find themselves addicted to opioids after suffering back pain or some injury. Doctors unwittingly feed this addiction by prescribing addictive pain killers not fully realizing that they are opening a new door to addiction. When the prescription becomes too expensive or runs out the victim turns to heroin.

Now we're are faced with a problem. In my area heroin has led to as many as twenty deaths a month. The local and state police are finding that arresting and jailing addicts is not working. They feel that taking the addict off the street and moving them to a drug infested jail is only masking the problem. Professionals in the field say that we must be open to new approaches. Too many young lives are being lost or ruined because proper treatment is not being made available, and that has to change. Most importantly, the street dealer must be found and arrested and jailed for the maximum punishment.

More and more local and statewide organizations are springing up to battle this problem, and ACAAP can stand in the forefront as a leader in the battle. We can serve as an organization that gathers these local groups and act as a clearing house for the latest information as to how others are handling this problem. We can also provide assistance with getting the word out to state and national legislators. We can provide educational material to aid our schools and churches in the battle to save our children. We can demand medical schools better train new physicians in the dangers of the drugs they are prescribing.

We cannot accomplish these goals without growth in the organization. We must find ways to establish ourselves as a leading faith based group with a national presence. We must be willing to lead the way in this battle to take control and rid ourselves of this national scourge. We need to make every effort to spread the word that we are here. In numbers there is strength and together we can win this terrible battle. ■

50 Reasons Why I Don't Drink

Pastor Jamie Morgan 12/29/2015

I am a Christian and I don't drink. I am also a pastor and ex-alcoholic. I need to make that disclaimer right up front. Although it makes me biased, it also makes me an expert on this hotly debated issue.

Some of the worst "shudder moments" of my life have been under the influence, and as a pastor, some of the worst "shudder moments" I have witnessed in the lives of others have been because of alcohol. You have come too late to tell me it's God's best for a Christian to drink.

We are living in a church age where drinking has become "hipster" for some. Christian young adults post pictures of their signature drink on Facebook. Middle-aged Christian women name drop their favorite brand of Pinot Grigio to impress their wine snob friends. Churches send direct-mail postcards that read, "Give our church a shot!" featuring an edgy shot glass graphic. Even some pastors drink. Not this one.

I stopped drinking when I became a Christian 26 years ago. No one told me to abstain. I just knew it would be contradictory and self-defeating to my relationship with Christ. I had given my life to follow Jesus and nothing was going to hinder my walk. For me, it was a no-brainer.

This article is not a theological defense on the topic of Christians and alcohol (another article for another time), but it is a heartfelt plea. I humbly ask you to table any knee jerk, pro-alcohol, fight-for-my-right-to-drink arguments that you have ever heard, or made, and prayerfully consider this list.

50 reasons why I don't drink:

1. I can't be sober-minded if I'm not sober.
2. Alcohol has an assignment: destruction.
3. Alcohol is a depressant. Anything that depresses should be avoided at all costs.
4. I don't want to make my brother or sister stumble in the name of exercising my "Christian liberties." My choice to drink could lead to someone's demise.
5. Alcohol skews my judgment.
6. Alcohol leaves me worse, not better.
7. What I do in moderation, my children will do in excess.
8. Even the unsaved know I shouldn't drink. Bible in one hand, beer in the other—any lost person could point this out as a confusing contradiction.
9. Alcohol doesn't bring others closer to the Lord when they see me drinking, but further away.
10. Alcohol doesn't bring me closer to the Lord when I drink, but further away.
11. I want to be fully awake and ready for the return of Christ, not drowsy, sluggish and fuzzy.
12. Show me a family for whom alcohol has made a positive difference in their lives. You won't be able to.
13. I have never heard anyone say, "Wow, that gin and tonic made me feel so Christlike!"
14. I want to avoid all appearances of evil.
15. Alcohol makes it much harder for me to practice the fruit of self-control.
16. Alcohol causes me to lose my filter.
17. Alcohol is a legal mind-altering drug.
18. Alcohol is addictive.
19. Alcohol is a numbing agent for pain and sorrow only Jesus can heal.
20. Many regrets are associated with alcohol. (I can give you a whole bunch!)
21. No one has ever said, "If only I had taken a drink, things wouldn't have gotten out of control."
22. Alcohol causes me to act in ways I normally wouldn't.
23. Alcohol kills brain cells.

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Visit the ACAAP Website to stay up-to-date on current issues regarding alcohol and marijuana; and read Dr. Bill Day's blog "Dayly Design."

www.sapacap.com.

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WHO WE ARE:

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

Visit the ACAAP Website at www.sapacap.com

American Council on Addiction and Alcohol Problems

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Save the Date!

2016 Annual Meeting

American Council on Addiction and Alcohol Problems

September 19-20, 2016

Host: Illinois Church Action on Alcohol and Addiction Problems

Place: Illinois Great Rivers Conference UMC Conference Center

5900 S 2nd Street, Springfield, IL 62711

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24. Alcohol is a counterfeit and provides a false peace.
25. The Bible says that no drunkards will enter the kingdom of God. Being drunk starts with one drink. I don't want to see how far outside the lines I can color when eternity is at stake.
26. Alcohol is a waster—money, gifts and talents, destinies and so on.
27. Alcohol leads to really bad behavior. It is a factor in 50 percent of violent crimes.
28. Alcohol distracts and derails you from living the victorious life for which Christ died.
29. Wisdom is the principle thing that I need to pursue at all cost; alcohol makes me stupid.
30. Alcohol has ruined many, many marriages.
31. The only influence I should be "under" is God's.
32. The Bible tells me to be alert; alcohol delays my reaction time.
33. If I don't start drinking, I'll never have to stop.
34. Alcohol severely tarnishes my testimony.
35. Don't want your teenagers to drink? Yep, same reasons apply to you.
36. God is holy; alcohol is not.
37. Alcohol and prayer don't mix.
38. Alcohol and Bible study don't mix.
39. Alcohol lowers my resolve to resist temptation.
40. Alcohol = Brokenness (broken lives, health, dreams and so on)
41. When the world sees us drinking, it sends the message that Jesus isn't enough.
42. Moderate drinking? How about moderate pornography or moderate heroin use or moderate lying or moderate adultery?
43. Christians are called to live a life of total surrender and separation from the world.
44. Alcohol makes me forget. It can make me forget that I am married, that I am saved and so on.
45. "I don't get drunk. I only have one or two drinks." If they didn't affect you, you would drink soda.
46. I should never look to the glass or bottle for joy, which can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.
47. Alcohol fills my mind with impure thoughts.
48. If it could hinder my faith walk or love walk or dishonor the lordship of Jesus Christ, I need to forsake it.
49. Alcohol doesn't help me run the race that Jesus has marked before me to finish with more accuracy. It does the polar opposite.
50. For any argument that tries to justify Christian drinking, there are at least 50 other reasons not to. The writing is on the wall. It's not God's best for Christians to drink. ■

Jamie Morgan is pastor of Life Church (Assemblies of God) and the Life House of Prayer (24/7 prayer). She graduated with her Master of Arts in Practical Theology from ORU and is pursuing her D.Min. at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

<http://www.charismanews.com/us/54097-50-reasons-why-i-don-t-drink>