

LESSON 21 - BE SOBER-MINDED

Why Does The Bible Say To Be Sober-Minded and Alert?

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Excerpted from: Holmes, Brian. “*The Empowered Christian Road Map*” Clearwater, FL: MPowered Christian Publishing, 2020.

Excerpted from: Holmes, Brian. “*Driveway Discipleship*” [The Empowered Christian Series] Clearwater, FL: MPowered Christian Publishing, 2021.

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Why does God’s Word repeatedly say to be sober-minded and alert? This should concern you as this instruction extends beyond the obvious use of alcohol or street drugs. Have you ever taken body, mind, or emotion-altering prescription medicines or supplements? These may also affect your ability to be fully sober-minded. Have you ever been really tired, stressed, hungry, or in pain? These too may put you in a state of mind that’s more vulnerable, easily triggered, and reactive. Insobriety is any state of mind where you’re less likely to do what you *should* do and more likely to give in to your sinful emotions, desires, and temptations in the moment. This means you’re not in control! We’re supposed to be mind-full, sober-minded, and in control of our thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Insobriety is very harmful. A persistent lifestyle and enjoyment of inebriation is evidence of the lack of the repentance and obedience necessary for salvation. But even *occasional, subtle* forms of insobriety in the lives of believers is harmful to our relationship with God, our transformation into Christ’s likeness, and our ability to glorify God with our lives. Insobriety is harmful in three main ways: 1) Insobriety *itself* is sin, 2) insobriety *leads* to other sins, and 3) insobriety increases our *vulnerability* to our enemies.

1. Insobriety Is Sin. Unless it’s for medical purposes insobriety is a violation of God’s law. The exception applies only if the medical treatment is necessary, temporary, wise and reasonable to godly counsel, and done with a clear conscience to God, in an otherwise sober lifestyle. In Leviticus 10:9 God said priests were not to enter His presence in priestly duty under the influence of alcohol at all, and if they did, they would die. 1 Timothy 3:3 and 3:8, and Titus 1:7 and 2:3, all list the desire for insobriety as an attribute by which to disqualify potential leaders. But sobriety isn’t just for leaders, it’s for *every* follower of Jesus! A lifestyle of regular insobriety is repeatedly listed as one of the types of sinful behavior that only the unsaved and condemned to Hell do. Galatians 5:21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9 describe drunkenness as an act of the sinful flesh and say, “*Do not be deceived... drunkards, and those who live like this... will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*” In 1 Corinthians 5:11 Paul admonishes the church to remove “believers” that are drunkards and to not even associate or eat with them! Examine yourself. If this is you, realize that you’re living in an ungodly way. Your church may not know what you’re doing but God does! If your church does know your lifestyle they may not hold you accountable and exercise church discipline like they should. Either way, acknowledge that this is sin and repent right now! God is righteous and holy—and *just*—the guilty will not go unpunished. Do not trample on God’s grace, assuming that He is so good and forgiving that you can continue to live in sin and still be saved because you believe in Jesus. (Demons

also believe in Jesus) The desire to do wickedness is evidence of not being born again yet. Fear God! Fear Hell! Fear God's wrath! Humble yourself. Examine yourself. Test yourself. If you fail the test, repent (change your mind/direction). Trust in Jesus having paid for those sins and live by the Spirit from now on.

2. *Insobriety Leads To Sin.* Despite the Bible's serious warnings against drunkenness it never says alcohol in and of itself is sinful. Jesus drank wine and never sinned once (see Luke 22:18, Hebrews 4:15). Even under the strict old covenant law God told the Israelites in Deuteronomy 14:26 that they may drink alcohol, in His presence, to celebrate Him! So having laws making all alcohol illegal misses the mark. It's not God's will for us to destroy human liberty through strict legalism. Legalism is laws or rules for right *outward* behavior while *inwardly*, people remain sinful and depraved. Jesus called religious leaders that did this "whitewashed tombs" because they were clean on the outside but full of dead bones on the inside. The main reason for us to be sober-minded is so we're *better able* to be self-controlled and disciplined, exercising wisdom and moderation with everything. Your motivation should be having a right relationship with God and pleasing Him with your entire life: thoughts, beliefs, feelings, motivations, and behaviors. 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 20 says, "*Not everything is beneficial... I will not be mastered by anything... honor God with your bodies.*" Do not do even what *leads* to sin. If one non-sinful behavior or act will lead you to sin in any other way abstain from it! If one drink leads to many do not have one. If one drink leads to pridefulness, gluttony, lust, sloth, anger, or any other sin don't drink at all. If your prescription mood stabilizer leads to lack of focus or desire to spend time with God, find an alternative. If *anything* you do, *leads* in any way, to any sin, then develop self control or abstain entirely. Romans 5:18 says, "*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*" 1 Peter 1:16 says, "*Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'*"

3. *Insobriety Increases Vulnerability.* 1 Peter 5:8 says, "*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*" The Bible tells us that Satan and his demonic forces have great influence in the world and it's under their power (1 John 5:19). He's called the "prince and ruler of this world" and "the god of this age." He has the ability to blind the minds of people (2 Corinthians 4:4) and desires to sift each one of us like wheat (Luke 22:31). Ephesians 6:11-13 says, "*Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes... So that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*" If you don't remain sober-minded, alert, and led by the Holy Spirit, you won't stand firm. Satan will sift you like wheat, and you'll fail the test and give in to sinful temptation or ungodly behavior, or at the very least fall short of your true potential in Christ. You'll hurt your personal walk with God and your example to others. Your struggle is not against humans but against the spiritual forces of sin and demons. Ephesians 6:18 says, "*With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*" You're called to be like Christ in character and purpose, Spirit-led, and on mission. 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 says, "*Let us be awake and sober... those who get drunk, get drunk at night... But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*"

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, remove every behavior or desire of insobriety that leads to sin, harms my relationship with You, or makes me less fruitful or more vulnerable to the enemy. In Jesus' name. Amen.