

Why I eat pork but don't drink booze

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If you didn't already know I recently graduated from university with a BA Abrahamic Religions (study of Judaism, Christianity & Islam).

After one of my lectures a while ago I walked past a procession of Shia Muslims along the Bayswater Road commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. They were chanting, sincerely praying and crying aloud. I felt moved by their devotion and love for God. As I continued walking home I was reflecting on what it meant to be a Muslim. **A life dedicated to the complete submission of will of Allah.**

Could I become a Muslim?

The first thing that came to my mind was that they don't eat pork. It sounds very shallow but I love pork sausages and rashers of bacon on my turkey at Christmas time. Is this something I would be prepared to give up? It is not an insignificant sacrifice. On top of that I would only be able to eat at restaurants that serve halal food. **Do I love God that much?**

Hmm...

Yes. I would readily give up eating pork for the love of God, to make that condition for God to be a part of my life. In case you haven't guessed I didn't decide to convert to Islam, but I did feel that I learnt something important about how I view my faith's disciplines and abstentions. Reflecting on religious traditions in general they seem to exist so that God can be present in our lives and ultimately bless us. Here is what God says in about His commandments to Israelites at Mt. Sinai:

Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.



It may seem that True Father too readily associated drinking alcohol with drugs and free sex and that as regards alcohol temperance might be more appropriate rather than complete abstinence – after all Jesus turned water into wine right guys? Evidently it is not inherently evil. However, not drinking alcohol is something we do as a religious community. **It is one of the marks of our faith.**

Through it we set ourselves apart from a modern culture that is often obsessed with getting bladdered at the weekend. It is too much associated with vapid materialism and hedonism of modern Britain. **This needs to be restored.** In what is a relatively small sacrifice for us, we are making a positive condition for the moral and spiritual renewal of this country.

Every time a choice must be made whether or not to drink alcohol, we are reminded about our commitment. We are forced to think about our faith, our identity, and our character. It is an act of faith and obedience to God and should be motivated by love for Him and for others. For those committed to this spiritual path **it is one of the things we give up and that God might give us so much more.**

I love God.
I am proud to say that.