

Question and Response About Social Drinking

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A question I received several years back from a Parent, and the answer I gave. I think it is very much relevant still today.

Question: What should we be telling our 2nd gen. concerning social drinking?

Answer: This question has been the most difficult for me to answer so far. Not necessarily because I do not know the answer, but I want to make sure that I would not be misunderstood, and/or misrepresent True Parents. Also, through my answer I want to help not cause additional confusion and possibly alienate blessed children or others.

It cannot be denied that social drinking has been observed among Unification Church members, and we cannot pretend that it does not happen.

This time I am going with bullet points to begin my answer and then elaborate on them.

- 1) True Father cannot openly approve of social drinking
- 2) One must be educated as to the ups and down of alcohol consumption and the mechanisms of addiction
- 3) It is best not to judge the behavior of another
- 4) Each individual should take responsibility for what they do

I have never heard any speech or read any document where True Father endorsed drinking, including social drinking. It is obvious to me why True Father would not publicly endorse the use of alcohol. True Father is not here to micro manage any of us. But, for example, if he would have said something like, "Social drinking is okay," would we be capable of knowing when social drinking stops and actual dependency starts? It would be hard to tell. It is well known among medical circles that many so-called "social drinkers" are actually dependent on alcohol and, therefore, way beyond social drinking status.

Peer pressure is what usually causes a young person to start drinking, but this is not the best reason for starting to taste alcohol. The more knowledgeable about the pitfalls of drinking alcohol, the better the chance a young person will have not to start. The more immature reason for starting to drink is to do it because others are doing it.

I am French; in the French culture drinking alcohol starts at baptism and, at least when I was there, never

ended! I drank growing up in a French household, however, I am not a drinker. I have done it on occasion in the past and observed that actually even though I do like the taste of a sweet red wine, my body does not like it.

Young people are very judgmental, it comes with the territory, and it is important that we guide them to make decisions that they can be comfortable with for a very long time.

Hopefully, by the time a parent is dealing with late teen difficult questions such as "social drinking," there is enough of a trust element between the parent and the child for the conversation to be truthful and helpful. One element that is very important to teach one's child is non-judgment. Judgment belongs to God, not to humans. If we start judging other people's behaviors, we limit ourselves in our ability to comprehend others and see them from God's point of view.

Many religious leaders in the past and present have lost their flocks because they were not able to live according to the standard they were demanding from their followers. Does that mean that their religious principles were false? Not necessarily. Religious people throughout history have failed miserably to follow basic principles taught by most faiths. Does that mean that we should not try to follow God's principles? Yes we should try--forever try to be the best people we can be. If a blessed child talks him or herself into the idea that it is okay to drink simply because they have seen church leaders, their own parents, or their peers doing it, they are passing judgment, and their motivation for drinking is not necessarily the best.

One will have to make up one's own mind according to one's conscience as to whether it is okay to drink a glass of wine or a beer in a particular setting. And one will have to live with the action of doing so. One's spiritual growth is dependent on every action taken throughout one's life.

I am reminded of one of the most famous Buddhist stories passed from one generation to the next. It goes like this:

In the old days man was close to nature and it was easy to become silent. This story belongs to that time. One day two Buddhist monks were returning to their monastery in silence.

A small river used to flow close to their monastery. Walking slowly, meditatively, they came across the river. They needed to cross it but there was no boatman. A beautiful young lady was waiting for a boatman to cross the river. The sun was about to set and darkness was spreading its kingdom.^[1] They all waited for some time for the boatmen and eventually decided to cross the river on their own. The younger of the two monks carried the lady on his shoulder, and three of them then managed the crossing. On the other side of the river the lady thanked the monks and went on her way. The two monks started moving towards their monastery, again in a meditative state. After some time the older monk broke the silence "I will tell everything to Master." The young monk was surprised and asked, "And what will you tell Master"? The old monk said, "That your reputation is spoiled. You have carried a woman on your shoulders, and it is a sin for a monk to touch a woman." The young monk replied "I only dropped the woman at the river bank. But you are still carrying her in your head."

Drinking a beer or a glass of wine once in a while is a bit the same. If the one doing the drinking is going to carry on the burden of doing so for days on end, then one should not do the drinking in the first place. On the other hand, if one does drink a glass of wine with a meal for whatever the reason, appreciates it and is grateful for being able to do so without succumbing to drunkenness and addiction, then that person most likely will be able to handle the spiritual responsibility of it quite well.

One last point before I close: education is the best way to help someone's behavior. If I was a high school or college teacher I would have my students do research on the effects of alcohol--in the family, and in the workplace. I would have them research not just the social effects, but also the monetary effect of alcohol consumption and alcohol dependency.

That is the best I can do at this time, I hope it helps,

Anne-Marie