

Can Christians Be Alcoholics?

by Mark Maulding

I asked this question when I was recently teaching in our Foundation for Transformation Weekend. We call it this because it has proven time and time again to be quite transformational for those who attend. It is a verse by verse study of Romans 5, 6, & 8. On the second night we were studying Romans chapter 6:1-7. In my opinion it is one of the most fantastic Scriptures in the entire Bible!

The idea is that our old identity from Adam has died. Our new identity in Christ has been created in His resurrection. Romans 6:6 says "knowing this, that our old self has been crucified with Him..." The old self is everything we were before we came to know Christ. It includes the identity you had when you showed up on planet earth. Romans 5:19 tells us this, "through one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so to the obedience of the One many will be made righteous." That is the incredible power of the gospel. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, who we were as sinners was put to death and we were raised up in Christ with a new identity of being righteous.

That is very difficult for most of us to accept. Why? Because we've learned to define ourselves by what we do. If we play tennis, we consider ourselves a tennis player. If we fail, we consider ourselves a failure. If we sin we consider ourselves a sinner. But that's not how it works in God's kingdom. In God's kingdom it is our birth which determines our identity. Our first birth made us sinners. Our second birth made us righteous, even though none of us will ever live a sinless life.

So, back to my question. Can Christians be alcoholics? Many in my class said "Yes" without hesitation. Then there was silence which seemed very long. But I said nothing. One or two began to say, "That's not possible". Again, I said nothing. The silence was uncomfortable. Finally I answered, "A Christian cannot be an alcoholic." However, a Christian can be addicted to alcohol. Again the class was silent." I asked, "Can a Christian be a liar?" Again I received some "yes" and "no" answers. I waited a little while longer. Then I said, "a Christian can lie but he can't be a liar".

Here is the wonderful good news of the gospel. God has so changed who we are that our behavior no longer defines us. Can we still sin? Of course! But our sins no longer define us.

Don't get me wrong. I understand why the 12-step programs try to get people to admit that they are alcoholics, liars, etc. It is to get them to break their denial. However, I think a better way to do this is to get Christians to realize who they are in Christ and that they have a habitual sin problem with their addiction to alcohol, drugs, pornography, etc. 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Our sin no longer defines us. Hallelujah! Our new birth in Christ defines us. Rejoice and be honest with yourself and with God about any sin you are consistently being defeated by. And if you need help, contact us. If we cannot help you in person or by Skype counseling, we can often refer you to someone else in your area who can.

Live Free In Christ,

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