

# Sermon outline: Alcohol and other drugs

**Topic:** A Christian response to alcohol and other drugs in Australia

**Main passage:** Proverbs 23:29-35

**Other passages:** Romans 13:1, Ephesians 5:18-20, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; Colossians 3:12.

## Introduction – Tonic or toxic?

Take a deep breath because we are about to discuss a tricky topic... something many Australians hold close to their heart ... as important as sport ... for many it's the way they mark Christmas and New Year ... we're talking about something so near and dear to Aussie culture that millions of people couldn't actually imagine life without it.

No, it's not family or mateship ... we're talking about alcohol.

Alcohol consumption is so embedded in our culture that many Aussies couldn't remember a family or social event without it. And sadly, some Australians treat illicit drugs the same way.

Look, I'm not trying to offend or judge you ... I know that many people can safely enjoy a quiet drink with the family ... but the sad truth is we live in a nation that not only tolerates but celebrates heavy drinking to the point where thousands of lives are at stake.

Consider this:

- In 2023-24, there were 1,765 alcohol-related deaths and 146,000 hospitalisations due to alcohol. There were 1,947 deaths due to all other drugs.<sup>1</sup>
- There is a 40.7 per cent average increase in domestic violence and 71.8% in non-domestic assaults across New South Wales on State of Origin game days.<sup>2</sup>
- Australians spend five times more on alcohol than they claim in charitable donations.<sup>3</sup>
- And 43% of Australians over the age of 14 have used illicit drugs in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025) [Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 February 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Livingston, M. (2018). The association between State of Origin and assaults in two Australian states. Bundoora: Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University.

<sup>3</sup> Knowles, D. (2018). A Snapshot of Australian Giving. Koda Capital.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019. Drug Statistics series no. 32. Cat. no. PHE 270. Canberra: AIHW. [page viii]

I think you get the picture. Australia doesn't just have an unhealthy relationship with alcohol and drugs. It has a real problem!

## So what does the Bible say about alcohol and drugs?

It's important that Christians have a biblical grasp on these issues, both so that we can help others but also to guide our own lives and families.

Yes, I know alcohol is a hot-topic in the church but if the Bible isn't shy about tackling booze then neither should we be! Check out this 'unfiltered' passage from Proverbs:

- **Proverbs 23:29-35** Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? <sup>30</sup> Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. <sup>31</sup> Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! <sup>32</sup> In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. <sup>33</sup> Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind will imagine confusing things. <sup>34</sup> You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. <sup>35</sup> "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

It's fairly sobering, but rather than trying to cover the whole debate over alcohol this morning, I want to try and cover what everyone should be able to agree on.

Firstly, as believers we should obey the laws of the land - unless they go against the law of God:

- **Romans 13:1** - Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

So that means underage drinking, drink-driving and illicit drugs aren't even up for debate. They're no-go zones.

Secondly, the Bible is also very clear that drunkenness isn't God's will for our life:

- **Ephesians 5:18-20** - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Drinking to excess can be a slippery slope to risk-taking and more sinful behaviour. But can you see the wonderful alternatives God gives us in that passage? Be *filled* with the Holy Spirit. *Encourage* each other in word and song. *Sing and make music* to the Lord, *showing gratitude* to God for everything he has made possible for us in Jesus. Rather than focusing on things that lead us away from God, why not focus on and give thanks for the joy we have in him?

God loves us, wants what's best for us and cares for us incredibly deeply – so deeply that he sacrificed his only son for us (John 3:16)! And he's given us his Holy Spirit as a reminder of that.

- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.

As Christians, if our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and God wants us to honour him with our bodies, doesn't that make our bodies worthy of care? It sure does!

### How to help someone struggling with addiction

- In the book *Dying for a Drink*, Dr Anderson Spickard and Barbara Thompson shared tips for people who want to help a loved one who is struggling with addiction:<sup>5</sup>
  1. **PRAYER:** People will only seek help when they want to change - we can't make them. But God can change a person's heart and he does listen to our prayers.
  2. **EDUCATION:** It is important to understand the addiction that they're dealing with and what can genuinely help the person. For example, going cold turkey can actually be life-threatening for people with significant alcohol or drug dependency.
  3. **FIND A SUPPORT GROUP:** Organisations such as Mission Australia and Alcoholics Anonymous have support groups for people struggling with addiction, and others offer support for their spouses and children. The hardest part is making that first contact, but the support can prove invaluable.
  4. **END THE ENABLEMENT:** As hard as it may seem, family and friends may need to let the person experience and own the consequences of their addiction for themselves. Sometimes it is only then they can see the need to seek professional support to overcome their addiction.
  5. **DON'T GIVE UP:** Continue to love, encourage and support them without sheltering them from the consequences of their actions. Don't give up on them. Keep praying and remember that God is at work.

### (INSERT PERSONAL STORY OR USE JIM'S STORY BELOW)

- A chaplain describes how he first met Jim working in the gardens of a homelessness service in Western Australia.
- "The first thing I noticed about him was the tattoo on his leg: *"Born Scum"*.

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<sup>5</sup> Spickard, Anderson, & Thompson, Barbara (2005). *Dying for a Drink: What You and Your Family Should Know about Alcoholism*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- We became friends and, one day over lunch, he told me his story ... most of his life had been spent behind bars and, even after he was finally released, he was still not free. Locked in a prison of drug addiction, Jim's social circle involved the dark crime scene around Perth.
- Determined to start afresh he turned to Mission Australia for drug counselling and accommodation. He also completed a course in Horticulture and small business management.
- Over the years, Jim found a little church close to the city. There he found hope, faith and friendship. He became a 'friend of Mission Australia', a regular face around Wattle House along with a few other regulars with similar stories, all bringing laughter and much merriment to the place.
- One day Jim and I were in McDonald's having lunch when he turned to me and said: "I'm dying, I have cancer. Will you see to it that I am buried in my garden at Wattle House?"
- This began a year-long journey, supporting Jim, along with his church, friends and family until his last breath.
- Sitting with Jim just days before he died, I noticed again the tattoo: 'Born Scum'. I looked him in the eye and asked: "Jim, that tattoo, do you still believe that?"
- Jim smiled weakly and whispered: "Not anymore, not anymore".

## So what then is our response to alcohol and other drugs?

I've already said that as Christians we should obey the law. From my perspective, this is how I approach alcohol <preacher to insert their personal approach to alcohol>.

Who's responsible for your body? You are and nobody else! You can choose when to say no, and definitely should say no if you're under 18 or unsure about it.

Even if you reach the view theologically that it's OK for you to consume alcohol responsibly, consider others who will be present before you do so. 1 Corinthians 8 talks about whether it's OK for Christians to eat food sacrificed to idols. But when you hear it, you'll notice the same idea could apply to consuming alcohol. Check out this passage:

- **1 Corinthians 8:9-13** - <sup>9</sup> Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling-block to the weak. <sup>10</sup> For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? <sup>11</sup> So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. <sup>12</sup> When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

So if you have a friend who has an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, think again before asking them to meet at the pub for dinner. Maybe go for a non-licensed option instead?

And if you do consume alcohol yourself, make sure you have checks and balances in place to prevent you over-doing it.

If you're becoming concerned about your ability to control how much you're drinking, think about asking someone you respect to help hold you accountable by regularly checking in with you and praying for you.

Remember that any addiction, whether it be alcohol, drugs, gambling, porn or even social media isn't something that people can just choose to switch off. It takes a huge amount of personal effort, often with professional help, over an extended period of time. Addiction also often comes with mental health or other life challenges, so overcoming it is complex.

We need to take a leaf out of Paul's letter to the Colossians towards those facing these issues.

- **Colossians 3:12** - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

### Three ways you can be part of the answer to alcohol and other drugs

1. **PRAY:** Pray for those battling addiction and for those working actively to help them. Pray for organisations such as Mission Australia which assisted 11,529 people across 35 alcohol and drug services in 2024-25. <sup>6</sup>

Sign up to receive Mission Australia's prayer diary at [missionaustralia.com.au/prayer](https://missionaustralia.com.au/prayer)

2. **VOLUNTEER:** There are many ways to help, from simply offering a smile and warm conversation to giving of your time and talents to bless others. You could get involved as a mentor to young people. You could offer to read the Bible, pray, encourage and help hold accountable someone you know who is struggling in this area. Or your church could serve alongside a Christian service organisation like Mission Australia.

For ideas, go to [missionaustralia.com.au/churches](https://missionaustralia.com.au/churches)

3. **GIVE:** Give of your finances to support the work of God in this area. As Jesus said in **Matthew 25:35** *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.*

This could be through your local church's ministries or you can donate to Mission Australia securely online at [missionaustralia.com.au](https://missionaustralia.com.au) or by phoning 1800 88 88 68.

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<sup>6</sup> Mission Australia Annual Report, (2025) [www.missionaustralia.com.au/who-we-are/our-governance/annual-report/](https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/who-we-are/our-governance/annual-report/)

### **Know someone who needs help?**

If they're seeking help, suggest they talk to their GP for referrals. You can also check if Mission Australia offers alcohol and other drug services or gambling help in your area: [missionaustralia.com.au/find-support](https://missionaustralia.com.au/find-support)