Is it Okay to Drink as a Christian?



Foreword

Is it Okay for a Christian to Drink? The Ultimate Guide

Few questions divide Christian households, churches, and consciences as sharply as the question of alcohol. Some believers treat any use of wine or spirits as an automatic compromise; others treat the same practice as a normal part of hospitality, celebration, and everyday life. Both camps can quote Scripture, both can appeal to history, and both can point to real damage caused by the other side. This guide does not aim to settle every pastoral case or cultural custom, **but to clear the ground so the biblical evidence can be heard on its own terms**. What does the text actually require, forbid, or leave free? Once that is clear, the further question of "**building fences**"—adding rules the text itself does not impose—can be examined honestly.

What does the Holy Bible say about drinking

The Bible nowhere issues a blanket prohibition on the consumption of alcoholic beverages. It repeatedly distinguishes between the use of wine and its abuse.

Positive or neutral references are numerous. **Psalm 104:15** lists "wine that gladdens the heart of man" among creation's good gifts, alongside bread and oil. **Ecclesiastes 9:7** simply says, "Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with

a merry heart." At the wedding in Cana (**John 2**), Jesus turns a large quantity of water into wine—good wine, the master of the feast notes—so that the celebration can continue. He is later accused of being a "glutton and a drunkard" in contrast to the austere John the Baptist (**Matthew 11:19**), an accusation that would be pointless if He had never drunk wine. Paul instructs Timothy to "use a little wine for the sake of your stomach, and your frequent ailments" (**1 Timothy 5:23**). The Passover and the Lord's Supper both employ wine; the cup is called "the fruit of the vine," not grape juice.

At the same time, the Bible is severe about drunkenness. **Proverbs 20:1, 23:29–35**, and **31:4–7** warn that wine mocks, leads to poverty, and dulls judgment. **Ephesians 5:18** commands, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." First Corinthians 6:10 lists drunkards among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. Noah's drunkenness (**Genesis 9**) and the resulting family shame stand as a cautionary narrative. Priests were forbidden to drink while on duty (**Leviticus 10:9**), and the Nazirite vow included temporary abstinence (**Numbers 6**). These texts target excess, loss of self-control, and the social or spiritual harm that follows—not the mere presence of alcohol in the cup.

The New Testament also places the issue inside the broader framework of Christian liberty and love for the weaker brother (**Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8–10**). What is lawful for one believer may still be unwise or unloving if it causes another to stumble. The governing principles are therefore sobriety, gratitude, and regard for others' consciences—not total abstinence as a universal rule.

The issue with building fences

"**Building fences**" is the practice of erecting extra prohibitions around a biblical command so that no one can come close to violating the command itself. **The Pharisees were masters of the method**; Jesus repeatedly criticized them for teaching the commandments of men as doctrine (**Mark 7:7–13**). In the case of alcohol, the fence often takes the form of total abstinence enforced as a mark of true spirituality.

The motive is frequently pastoral and understandable. Alcohol has destroyed marriages, careers, and lives. In cultures where drunkenness is rampant, some churches have chosen corporate abstinence as a protective boundary. That choice

can be a legitimate exercise of Christian freedom for a particular community. **The problem arises when the fence is treated as the biblical command itself.** Scripture forbids drunkenness; it does not forbid the moderate use of wine. When a community or tradition equates the two, several distortions follow.

F**irst**, the conscience is bound where God has left it free. Believers who drink in moderation are then suspected of compromise, while those who abstain are regarded as automatically more holy.
Second, the actual sin of drunkenness can be obscured. If the only recognized problem is "drinking," then a person who never touches alcohol yet lives in other forms of excess or self-indulgence may appear righteous, while a person who occasionally enjoys a glass of wine is marked as worldly.
Third, the gospel is quietly replaced by a behavioral checklist. The New Testament's emphasis on the Spirit's fruit—self-control among them—is narrowed to a single external rule.

Fences can also become tools for judging other Christians across cultures, denominations, and ethnic backgrounds. For centuries, wine has been an ordinary part of meals, festivals, and even Communion in many non-Western churches and in older Christian traditions—such as among Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican believers in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia. In these settings, moderate drinking is often seen as normal hospitality rather than a moral issue.

By contrast, many evangelical and Protestant groups in the United States and other English-speaking countries adopted total abstinence during the 19th- and early 20th-century temperance movements. When that standard is treated as the only faithful Christian position and imposed on everyone else, it often reflects a specific denominational or ethnic history more than Scripture's clear teaching. The same problem appears in reverse when believers from wine-friendly cultures dismiss all caution about alcohol as legalism, or treat Christian liberty as permission to drink without self-control. Both approaches turn cultural habits into tests of spirituality and miss the biblical balance of freedom with responsibility.

Conclusion

It is okay for a Christian to drink. The Bible presents wine as a legitimate gift of God when received with thanksgiving and used in moderation. It is not okay for a Christian to get drunk. **Drunkenness is explicitly condemned**, and the Christian is called to be filled with the Spirit rather than controlled by wine. Between those two poles lies a wide area of Christian liberty that must be exercised with wisdom, self-control, and love for others.

Some believers will choose total abstinence for personal, cultural, or pastoral reasons. That choice is honorable when it is made freely and without imposing the same rule on every other conscience. Others will drink moderately and give thanks. That choice is equally honorable when it does not become an occasion for excess or for wounding a brother or sister. **The ultimate guide is not a fence built by human tradition, but the clear word of Scripture**: receive God's gifts with gratitude, refuse to be mastered by them, and walk in love.