

How Far Can We Go?

by Casey Head

It is common for Christians to debate the sinfulness of various moral issues such as drinking or gambling. Some will take the position that a certain activity is generally sinful, while others will say that only extreme forms of that activity are sinful. Take drinking for example. Those Christians who stand for the truth will show that drinking is generally sinful and that the people of God must avoid all forms of drinking, whether that be wine with dinner, social drinking or drunkenness. Others who have compromised the truth will only say that drunkenness is sinful and will never condemn minor forms of drinking. We SHOULD discuss and debate the sinfulness of these various moral issues, but we must accept the fact that not everyone will be convinced. As a result, it is necessary that we address the attitude “How far can we go?”

All Christians will agree that drunkenness is sinful, as it is plainly condemned in the Bible time and time again (Lk. 21:34; Rom. 13:13). Some, however, will say that minor levels of drinking are acceptable. They will argue that a beer with the guys on Friday night is harmless and that wine with dinner is pleasant and romantic. Furthermore, they will argue that drinking is not sinful until the point of drunkenness is reached. But friends, this is the wrong attitude to have- a very dangerous attitude, in fact. If our attitude is, “How far can we go?” or “What can we get away with?” then we are in a very dangerous and sinful place.

We must guard our hearts and set HIGH standards. David says in Psalm 141:3-4, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.” And Paul says in Romans 13:14, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” In both of these passages, we see that Christians need to not only resist temptation, but we must do our best to avoid it! If something is sinful, then stay far away from it. Don’t walk the line. Let us continue to use the activity of drinking as an illustration. If drunkenness is sinful, and if drinking is given such a negative connotation in scriptures, then shouldn’t we stay away from it entirely? If three beers will make you drunk, and if two will make you tipsy, then why would you even want to drink ONE? It is the same with gambling and dancing!

Christians are to be distinct and separate from the world, but some Christians want to get as close to the world as possible. How sinful is this attitude? Shouldn’t we want to get as far away from the world as possible? Notice the words of God in 1 Peter 4:3-4, “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.” We used to live sinfully and carnally, but now we are to live spiritually, wholly devoted to God. Examine your way of life. How do you compare to your worldly friends? Is there a clear difference? If not, then perhaps you need to make some serious changes in your life.

It is so important when discussing moral issues that we not only show the sinfulness of a certain immoral activity, but that we stress the dangers as well. Don’t allow the following line of thinking to prevail following a debate: “They tried to prove that this activity is generally sinful, but they failed, so I can continue to practice minor forms of this activity without feeling guilty.”