The Sober Truth

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When I read Luke Hulley's article, My Beers and My Bro's, I was reminded of my own history with alcohol, and how the Lord brought me to true freedom. It is with gratitude that I can share my story with you.

It was the norm within my family to drink every day; most of my relatives did so. My grandfather and a few of my aunts and uncles were heavy drinkers, and my parents' favourite outing was to go to a bar, drink beers and play shuffleboard.

With this as the example, I soon followed suit, getting drunk and smoking marijuana by the age of 15. By the age of 19, I was getting high almost every night, and drinking a beer was as normal as drinking water.

It was at this point, when I was 19 years old, that I got radically born again – my life did a 180. I stopped all drug and alcohol use and poured myself into the church. I abstained from alcohol for 12 years.

However, after all this time, I started drinking socially again; not getting drunk, but drinking in a way that I thought was acceptable. I was free in Christ, why would I then deny myself this freedom?

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With this mindset, I was unable to see that drinking was leading me into bondage.

“For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13 (NLT)

My perceived freedom to drink only satisfied my flesh, it did nothing to edify my spirit, causing a blindness to the fact that my heart was now divided: I would never miss a weekend of drinking, but missing church on occasion wasn’t a problem. It would take 30 years before I would be free again.

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I thought I was cautious by limiting drinking to weekends, I was convinced that I was not living a ‘drinking lifestyle’. But all week I would look forward to Friday, when I could enjoy the ‘fellowship of drinking’ with my wife and friends, believers and unbelievers alike. My affections were more focused on this fellowship than the true fellowship of the saints and church on a Sunday.

Totally blind to these misplaced affections, I misused this freedom we have in Christ, hindering my full devotion to Him and His church. No-one from the outside questioned my devotion either.

It was only in 2021 that it became clear that my heart was divided. As we left our church of 20 years, due to irreconcilable doctrinal differences, I decided to pray and fast alcohol until we were committed to the church to which God was calling us.

It was not my intention to give up alcohol forever, however God had something different in mind for us. This ‘fast’ of mine will only end on the day I drink it new with Jesus, in the Kingdom of our Father.

_“Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.” _Matthew 26:29 (NLT)

God revealed two things to me about alcohol when I fasted. Firstly, that generational sins had blinded and hindered me from being fully devoted to Christ. It was within my power to reduce the grip of those generational sins affecting my kids and grandkids.

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Secondly, He called me to be counter-cultural, an example to the flock amid a world and church where alcohol can blind and hinder full devotion to Jesus Christ.

Abstaining from alcohol over the past three years has been a wake-up call: I have been set free to give my full devotion to Jesus Christ, my Lord.

I realise that alcohol doesn't have the same hold on everyone and might not hinder their devotion to Christ. But I also know that there are many like me who have allowed alcohol to hinder their full devotion to Jesus and His Church. My prayer is that they would join me in setting "our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2 (KJV)

This testimony was written in response to Luke Hulley's article, My Beers and My Bro's. We would also highly recommend reading How to Live Accountable Lives, by Elizabeth East, which provides practical handles for freedom and healing through accountable living.
If through reading this, you have become more aware of your own struggles or addictions, please reach out to your community leader or local eldership team.