



# ALCOHOLISM

## Background

Habitual use of alcohol often results in addiction. The drinker's inadequacies, faults, and problems become intensified, and often personality changes result. Though feeling confident when under the influence of alcohol, he or she is often immature, insecure, and afflicted by guilt and depression. The alcoholic does not feel good about himself or herself and cannot face the addiction and the problems it creates; so he or she denies the problem and is dishonest in covering it up and in blaming it on family members, parents, work supervisors, or the "bad breaks" of life. This deviousness and denial leads to a masquerade in life that at times assumes almost comic, though actually tragic, overtones.

Alcoholics desperately need help. Alcoholics Anonymous maintains that until alcoholics hit rock bottom, admitting their life is out of control, there is little hope of any change. Admitting that there is a problem is the first step on the road to recovery.

There *is* hope for the alcoholic: God is able to deliver from this as well as any other addiction.

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*Billy Graham writes: "The Bible teaches that there is deliverance from the things that come upon the world . . . not by chemicals, but by Christ, bringing the mind and heart into harmony with God through submission to His will and accepting His forgiveness. . . . In Christ alone there is deliverance from man's tortured thoughts and freedom from the sordid habits which are destroying so many people. Why does the Bible so clearly denounce drunkenness? Because it is an enemy of human life. Anything that is against a person's welfare, God is against."*

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## Helping Strategy

1. If the inquirer is drunk or "high," any help you try to offer will be futile, a conversation with the alcohol and not with the person; it could even be counterproductive for the alcoholic. Arrange a meeting or have him or her telephone the following day when he or she is sober. If the person appears to be out of control, get him or her to a detox center. In some cases, you might ask if there is someone else available to take the person to a center.

2. Because alcoholics are often dishonest and deceivers—con artists—you must evidence a “tough love” in dealing with them. Ask if he or she really wants help. Or did he or she just get in touch with you in order to make excuses or blame the problem on other things and people, while hiding his or her real self and the real problem?

In taking a tough stance, avoid being judgmental and do not use the Bible as a club. Helpful Scripture texts will come out naturally as you present the Gospel. Assure the inquirer that he or she is in touch with the right person because you care and are glad to speak with him or her (unless he or she is drunk).

3. Emphasize that the alcoholic must admit having a problem he or she can't cope with alone, and must be willing to make a commitment to quit drinking for good. Nothing short of this will do! The masquerade must stop, once and for all. He or she must admit being personally responsible for the condition and the problems.
4. This might be the time to ask the person if he or she has ever received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Christ went to the cross specifically for him or her; Christ offers both salvation and reformation. Share “Steps to Peace with God,” page 11.
5. Return to the things you were discussing on point number 3; the alcoholic must:
  - A. Never again use alcohol. Living one day at a time, he or she must learn to trust God's promise in regard to temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13; see “Scripture”).
  - B. Sever all relationships that cause enslavement to this pattern of behavior: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character’” (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV).
  - C. Establish new relationships:
    - Seek out a local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous or other support groups. They are listed in the telephone book.
    - Identify with a Bible-teaching church for the spiritual support of worship, Bible study, and fellowship.
6. Be honest with the alcoholic in warning about possible relapses, but also encourage him or her that a relapse doesn't mean that all is lost. Renewal may be sought on the basis of 1 John 1:9, and the steps of point 5 must be practiced a day at a time.
7. Pray for deliverance from the compulsion and bondage he or she is under, and for a transformation of mind and life by the power of God



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(see Romans 12:1–2). Explain the value of a life of prayer.

8. If your inquirer is a Christian who has become a victim of alcohol, use the above steps, then share “Restoration,” page 17, emphasizing 1 John 1:9 and 2:1.
9. Whatever the situation, urge the alcoholic to seek further counseling from a pastor or psychologist who understands alcoholism or chemical dependence. Many times it is necessary to deal with the underlying causes of the addiction, such as insecurity, guilt, failure, stress, or deviant sexual behavior.

## Scripture

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3).

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV).

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9).

### *Other suggested Scriptures:*

Matthew 11:28

John 3:16

Romans 12:1–2

Romans 14:11–12

2 Corinthians 2:14

Galatians 5:22–23