

***We often hear it said, "You can't legislate morality."  
As an example they say, "Look how Prohibition failed."  
You need to know . . .***

## ***The Truth About Prohibition***

Through the years, there has been a useful body of pertinent research done by well-recognized historians on the general background of Prohibition.

For example, Bernard Weisberger, a nationally- recognized historian who writes a current-events column ("In the News") for the popular historical journal *American Heritage*, recently addressed the widespread (mis)conception that Prohibition "didn't work." Among the facts cited by Weisberger are:

"Prohibition did reduce drinking. The average annual per capita consumption of alcohol by Americans of drinking age - that is, the total alcoholic content of all the beer, wine, and distilled spirits they consumed - stood at 2.60 gallons" in 1910. In 1934, after more than a decade of prohibition, Weisberger reports the per capita average of 0.97 gallons.

"Census Bureau studies show that the death rate from chronic or acute alcoholism fell from 7.3 per 100,000 in 1907 to 2.5 in 1932, Prohibition's last year. Deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, one cause of which is alcohol abuse, dropped from 14.8 per 100,000 in 1907 to 7.1 in 1920 and never rose above 7.5 during the 1920's. Economic studies estimated that savings and spending on household necessities increased among working-class families during the period, possibly from money that once went to drink." These are not the propaganda of some biased zealot, but the factual report of a nationally known historian. Furthermore, Weisberger reports that one reason why Prohibition may be commonly thought so unsuccessful is that even the above improvements were achieved with a minimum of enforcement. He continues:

"Drinking might have been cut back even further if more resources had been devoted to enforcement. In 1922 Congress gave the Prohibition Bureau only \$6.75 million for a force of 3,060 employees (including clerical workers) to hunt for violators in thousands of urban neighborhoods, remote hollows, border crossings, and coastal inlets. State legislators were equally sparing: in 1926 state legislatures all together spent \$698,855 for Prohibition work, approximately one-eighth of what they spent on enforcing fish-and-game laws. Even so, by 1929 the feds alone had arrested more than half a million violators. "

Nor is this "new" information; a 1968 article by historian of science John C. Burnham of Ohio State University in the *Journal of Social History* revealed even more data along the lines Weisberger adduces. To imply that attempts to restrict alcohol sales can't be effective ignores the available evidence. Professor Norman H. Clark's 1976 study, *Deliver Us From Evil*, makes a persuasive case that during Prohibition, arrests for drunkenness and alcohol-related crimes declined markedly.

Of course, a much earlier author reminds us across the ages that "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).

***- by Steve Wolfgang***

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## ***Is It A Contradiction?***

Years ago I was talking to some fellows who asserted the Bible is full of errors. When I asked them for an example, they cited the four accounts of the inscription on Jesus cross. John's account says it read, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19). The others give slight variations, yet no two are identical (Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38). Is that a contradiction?

Have you ever seen a sign that said, "Warning: shoplifters will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law"? If you asked multiple people who saw that sign what it said, you might get several technically different answers. One might cite it word-for-word, others might abbreviate it to varying extents, another might just paraphrase it. Would you conclude that none had actually seen the sign or knew what it said? Of course not. Then why treat the gospel writers that way?

The gospel writers are too often in a no-win situation with critics: if they say exactly the same thing they are accused of collusion, and if they differ they are charged with contradiction.

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## ***Tell Me The Old, Old Story***

*(but give it to me in digestible bites!)*

Knowing the best approach to use and the right things to say when teaching someone the gospel is a difficult challenge. Our judgments about how to proceed will be flawed from time to time, but good and honest hearts will be ready to accept God's truth despite our failings.

One of the critical things in this process is determining a student's basic level of knowledge. We must be able to determine where to start with each individual learner. Philip did this in an expert way when he encountered the Ethiopian eunuch. A simple question, an observation of the text the eunuch was reading, a statement by the man himself, and Philip was ready. He "began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). We will do well to follow Philip's example. Make no assumptions about what your prospect knows. Find out where your student is in terms of fundamental knowledge and commence your teaching at the appropriate starting place. Failure to do so will lead to confusion and frustration for both the student and the teacher.

Another essential component of effective teaching is to keep the instruction in manageable 'bites'. Too often we see well-intentioned Christians launch off into long discourses that incorporate way too much information. It all makes sense to them, of course – and they sincerely want to share their understanding with the one they are teaching – but it is simply too much. The student will not be able to take it all in. They won't be able 'to see the forest for the trees', and they may very well throw up their hands in despair. So, our best approach is to take it slowly. Methodically walk the student through the necessary foundational truths. While it may be possible to do this "in the same hour of the night" (Acts 16:33), it often will take several carefully planned sessions. Knowing how much and how fast to 'feed' the student is a much needed talent in teachers.

The apostle Paul urged: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6). Salt, of course, is a good thing, but too much ruins the food. The same is true of our efforts to inform others. We need to be doing this essential work, but let us pray for wisdom (James 1:5) so that we serve up the truth in an effective way that does not overwhelm the one we are trying to teach. Think!