

# Speaking to the soul



## Alcohol abuse

**Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is**

## **the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Proverbs 22:29 - 30**

The abuse of alcohol is clearly not a new problem. These verses reveal a deep understanding of a challenge which continues to test our society. In the UK more than 8,000 people die from alcohol-related illnesses every year. Hospital admissions for alcohol-related conditions have risen by about 40 per cent over the past ten years. Alcohol abuse is estimated to cost our society more than £20bn a year. Clearly this is a huge challenge, and it is amazing to see these Proverbs written so long ago addressing the issue with such power.

Some people might think of the writer of Proverbs as being a kill joy, but his purpose was exactly the opposite. He could see that alcohol could so easily ruin people's lives. In the following verses he talks about the way in which wine can, when drunk to excess, bite like a poisonous snake. He then predicted: "You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say: 'They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can look for another drink?'" (Proverbs 23:33-35). The writer is clearly mocking the sheer stupidity of drinking to excess. It causes nothing but brokenness and sadness.

The writer has a list of things that need to be avoided at all costs – overeating, idleness, prostitutes, arrogance and bad company as well as drinking to excess. He isn't willing to negotiate. This might sound harsh but when we recognise that these are words of wisdom, and that they come from the heart of a God who loves us, we can follow them in the

knowledge that they will be a blessing not only to us but to all those around us as well.

## **QUESTION**

What could you do to help those in your area who have a problem with alcohol?

## **PRAYER**

Lord God, I pray for those who are struggling with alcohol abuse in my own community. Please show me ways in which I could be a blessing to them. Amen

*Photograph - Gougane Barra, County Cork*

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