

VIDEO ON ALCOHOLISM

By Pastor Mardochée Nadoumngar

(First part)

Dear friends, I greet you!

I am Mardochée Nadoumngar, Assistant Pastor at Assemblée Chrétienne “la Bonne Nouvelle” here in Ndjaména, Chad. I am married to Ruth Doumdjé and we have 5 children including 4 boys and a daughter with two grandchildren. I served for several years as Director of the Shalom Higher Evangelical School of Theology (ESTES), today FATES; and since October 2014, I work with some Theological Institutions in Francophone Africa on behalf of Overseas Council, a Christian organization based in the United States.

It seemed urgent to bring this video to the attention of all and especially to the attention of you, my Chadian compatriots. This work is the substance of my doctoral thesis in Theology on “Mobilizing the Chadian Church to Understand and Treat Alcoholism.” In fact, lately I am astonished and even shocked - and I think that is the finding of many. Yes, I am shocked by the way in which the Chadians consume alcohol; men and women, old men and young men. You just have to go out in our streets in the afternoon and see how the bars and cabarets are invaded by a large part of the population who settle hours and hours drinking.

In this video, we will present three essential points that are the awareness of the problem of alcoholism, the biblical understanding of alcohol consumption and the position of the Christian facing alcohol.

FIRST, LET US TALK ABOUT THE AWARENESS OF ALCOHOL PROBLEM

Many people laugh when we talk about alcoholism, because they do not care. It is not enough to say that there is a problem of alcohol in town, in a country, or in the church. So people need to be aware of the problems caused by alcoholism, to be concerned about this issue, and they can say, “This is our problem.”

A. What is alcoholism?

Alcoholism is abuse of alcoholic beverage, resulting in loss of freedom in relation to alcohol. In other words, alcoholism reduces man to a state of dependence. This dependence is manifested by a marked taste for alcoholic beverage and the appearance of serious disorders when the body is deprived of alcohol. There is a lack: tremors, sweating, anxiety, and general discontent. These conditions subside when one consumes alcoholic beverages. The one who is alcoholic is caught in a vicious circle: no alcohol, he feels bad, very bad. With alcohol, he is a slave and destroys himself more and more, obsessed with the fear of being exhausted. Alcohol is a real drug, a product that creates an addiction. One cannot do without it.

An alcoholic is a person whose desire to consume alcohol in one form or another becomes stronger, more or less frequent, and more or less regular.

According to Roy Woodruff, an alcoholic is a person who “must” have a drink before he can make the next step in life, whether that step is eating, working, dancing or paying his bills. Often, he needs alcoholic beverages in him to feel comfortable.

B. What are the causes of alcoholism?

Human beings consume alcohol for various causes that can be grouped into three categories: personal, social and economic.

1. Personal or individual causes

a) Taste of alcohol: Some people drink alcohol because they like it. Others do not like the taste of alcohol at first, but at the length of time they get used to it.

b) The effect of alcohol: Other people hate the taste of alcohol, but they like the effect it produces. It does well to them; it produces euphoria, a feeling of well-being. It seems that alcohol can free them from their tensions and the stresses of life, worries and anxieties and makes them forget their problems. It frees them from shyness, inferiority complex, shame and fear and gives them the opportunity to have a good time, not to be restrained from saying and doing things that they would not have made or spoken without alcohol.

2. Social causes

a) Influence of family: in families where one drinks a lot, even very young children are invited to consume alcoholic beverages; the influence of example and the weight of the habit do not disappear easily.

b) Influence of friends: Many young people start drinking simply by imitation. Because friends drink, they also drink to conform to the model of youth. The Bible condemns this type of company in these terms: “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

c) Influence of living conditions: because of lack of food due to poverty, misery and idleness, some people consume alcohol as food if they find it, because they are hungry and have nothing to eat; difficult working conditions can be the cause of alcoholism. In forced labor or work carried out in the heat, or cold, at the rapid pace of the chain work, alcoholic beverages are consumed voluntarily to combat thirst and fatigue.

d) Influence of social environment: To be considered in the business world, one must be in the “circle of friends.” In this environment, can one refuse a glass of alcoholic beverage and then a second, and the next one?

e) Influence of profession: There are professions that excite people to drink, especially those that cause thirst (cooks, blacksmiths, forced laborers, etc.), those where there is contact with public (barmen, servants of restaurants and hotels, etc.).

3. Economic causes

Excessive production of alcoholic beverages and misleading advertisements on alcohol consumption encourage people to drink cheaply and abundantly.

In summary, we can say that people can drink alcohol because they like the taste and effects it produces, because of social pressure, or because of a physiological need. This physiological urge to drink is particularly important in the problem of alcoholism. However, it should be noted that the environment, while encouraging people to use alcoholic beverages, still leaves it to those who are well informed, the freedom to consume alcohol or not. The environment influences people who are psychologically fragile, or who ignore the risks involved. This means that lack of knowledge about risks associated with alcohol consumption remains the main cause of alcoholism.

C. The Consequences of Alcohol

Alcohol abuse not only hurts individual but causes damage in family relationships and society in general in terms of violence, crime, accidents, etc.

1. The consequences of alcohol on the body

a) Physical Effects: Prolonged alcohol abuse over long periods of time can negatively affect the body in several ways: the brain, liver, heart, lungs, stomach, pancreas, intestines, kidneys, bones, obesity, skin, reproduction.

b) Mental and emotional effects: depression, lack of concentration, emotional disturbances, memory loss and suicidal tendencies.

2. The consequences of alcohol on the family

a) Violence in the family,

b) Marital conflict and divorce,

c) Economic effects,

d) Shame and humiliation.

3. The consequences of alcohol on society

a) Accidents: This includes traffic accidents, domestic accidents, fires, and accidents at work.

b) Violence: Alcohol is associated with violent crime, verbal aggression.

c) Economic effects: losses in productivity related to crime, social protection expenditure, motor vehicle accidents, and destruction by fire.

D. The situation related to alcohol: the case of Chad

Today, most Chadians, especially in the southern part of the country, are involved in alcohol abuse: old people, adults and adolescents, especially young people.

Based on a simple observation, the phenomenon of alcoholism is widely observed in women and especially in young adolescents, boys and girls, and in particular towards the end of the year; in cities and in rural areas, the phenomenon is growing rapidly. The black market is flooded with all types of alcoholic beverages imported illegally and of an unknown quality. School violence, traffic accidents, the spread of HIV / AIDS among young people are all signs of this plague that must be of concern to all.

1. A first look at the use of alcohol by Christians in Chad

In March and April 2011, I did a survey based on a questionnaire to find out whether alcoholism is a real problem in the Chadian Church or not. Of the 80 people (pastors, lay Christians, students of the seminary, representatives of Christian organizations, etc.) whom I contacted, 100% agreed that alcoholism is a real problem in the Chadian Church.

The Gospel reached Chad in 1920, which means that the Church in Chad is still young. However, there is big difference between the Church of yesterday and the Church of today.

At the beginning of its expansion, while the Catholic Church was tolerant of alcohol, the Protestant Church in Chad had an almost unanimous view of it: Protestant Christians are forbidden to drink alcohol. At the time, when a Protestant Christian drank wine, beer or other alcoholic beverages, it was said that he had sinned and that he or she was placed under the discipline of Church. This difference in attitude towards alcohol consumption between Catholics and Protestants in Chad depends on those who brought the Gospel to Chad. According to the late Reverend René Daïdanson, French missionaries who had evangelized Chad were Catholic and tolerant of alcohol consumption. Therefore, they allowed first Catholic Christians to drink alcohol. On the contrary, Protestant missionaries who evangelized Chad were all Anglophones from Norway, Australia, New Zealand, etc., all of whom were abstinent. Therefore, they prohibited any form of alcohol consumption. This is why Catholic Christians drink alcohol but until the end of 1970, Protestant Christians in Chad were still abstinent in their majority.

2. The situation today

Today the situation has changed for three reasons: the influence of foreigners, the oil boom with economic growth, and the lack of education on the sin of drunkenness.

a) The influence of foreigners: Chadians who came from foreign countries after years of study or business introduced the idea of Christian freedom that allows every Christian to drink alcohol. Consequently, Christians consume alcoholic beverages in public or in secret by imitation, and church leaders do not say anything. This offends faith of those who do not drink alcohol because they think it is sin to do so. Moreover, Church leaders are not only silent about this change, but also, some of them are counted among alcohol drinkers or sellers of alcohol, especially some women Christians who make the sale of alcohol their business and offend Christians who do not consume it. So many Christians continue to ask questions such as: Is it sinful or not to drink alcohol? Is it permissible or not for a Christian to drink alcohol in moderation?

The situation is complicated because drinking Christians say that the Bible does not prohibit alcohol, but it is Church leaders in Chad who exaggerate with their laws. They also say that in other countries, Christians, pastors, elders and deacons drink alcohol, but it is only in Chad that the Church exaggerates. Those who consume alcohol often remember that Paul the Apostle told Timothy not to continue to drink only water, but to use a little wine because of his stomach and his frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23). They also tell anyone who wants to hear that Jesus Christ himself has turned water into wine, and that it is therefore normal for Christians to drink alcohol. This ignorance of

the context of biblical passages thus quoted excites many Christians and especially young people to drink alcohol.

b) The oil boom and economic growth: Unfortunately, the oil era in which Chad entered in 2003 aggravated the situation. Those who work with oil companies earn large wages and begin to drink without restraint and become alcoholics. As we know, negative consequences of alcohol are serious. In addition to physical, social, psychological and spiritual consequences of alcohol on them, they are less and less frequent in church. When one tries to help them give up alcohol and return to Church, they often quote the Bible, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). Consequently, the more the number of these hesitant Christians increases, the more the Church decreases quantitatively and qualitatively.

c) The lack of teaching about sin of drunkenness: The difficulty is not only on the side of Christians who consume alcohol, but also on the side of leaders of the Church who must manage this situation. In the beginning, when the Gospel arrived in Chad, teaching was that drinking was sin. However, by carefully reading the word of God and other books about alcohol, listening to discussions with other “men of God” about alcohol, most of leaders of the Church of God, today tend to tolerate alcohol consumption and even not to talk about it, especially when used in moderation. They hesitate to criticize or discipline a Christian who drinks alcohol, especially if he does so in moderation. Moreover, in this age of freedom where no one wants to offend the mind of other, even a clear biblical teaching on alcohol is almost avoided in the Church.

To help understand this issue, it is necessary to examine what the Bible says about drinking.