

Key Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 9:7 (NLT)

7 So go ahead. Eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God approves of this!

Psalms 104:14–15 (NLT)

14 You cause grass to grow for the livestock

and plants for people to use.

You allow them to produce food from the earth— 15 wine to make them glad, olive oil to soothe their skin, and bread to give them strength.

Galatians 5:19–23 (NLT)

19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Share a humorous or surprising story about a time when something didn't go as planned at a social gathering or celebration. How did you or others respond to the unexpected situation?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Ecclesiastes 9:7 and Psalm 104:14-15.** How do these verses inform our understanding of God's intention for joy and celebration versus misuse and excess? (Ref **John 2:1-11**)
- The sermon highlighted the distinction between what is legal and what is morally right. How do you navigate this difference in your own decisions and can you support those decisions with Scripture?
- **Read Galatians 5:19-23** and compare the two lists. How can we cultivate the fruits of the Spirit while diminishing the deeds of the flesh?
- **Ephesians 6:12** and **1 Peter 5:8** describe the spiritual battle behind much addiction and misuse. How does putting on the 'armor of God' or being 'sober-minded' equip us to face these and other spiritual challenges?
- Reflecting on the closing message, what does it mean that 'we are all sick and we all need help, and Jesus Christ is the only one who can help us'? How can we apply this understanding in our approach to addiction, broader misuse, and how we help others?
- In his message, Jeremy emphasized the importance of community, accountability, and authenticity in addressing challenges and making life changes. How can a Small Group help you overcome such challenges?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Choose one fruit of the spirit which you feel God is calling you to more intentionally cultivate, and commit to a daily practice of demonstrating this fruit with others, and meditating on it daily.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Let's pray for those struggling with substance abuse, for the wisdom to navigate our freedoms in Christ in a way that honors Him, and for the strength to support and encourage each other in grace and truth.

Question: "What does the Bible say about drinking alcohol / wine? Is it a sin for a Christian to drink alcohol / wine?"

Answer: Scripture has much to say regarding the drinking of alcohol (Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3; Deuteronomy 29:6; Judges 13:4, 7, 14; Proverbs 20:1; 31:4; Isaiah 5:11, 22; 24:9; 28:7; 29:9; 56:12). However, Scripture does not necessarily forbid a Christian from drinking beer, wine, or any other drink containing alcohol. In fact, some passages of Scripture discuss alcohol in positive terms. Ecclesiastes 9:7 instructs, "Drink your wine with a merry heart." Psalm 104:14-15 states that God gives wine "that makes glad the heart of men." Amos 9:14 discusses drinking wine from your own vineyard as a sign of God's blessing. Isaiah 55:11 encourages, "Yes, come buy wine and milk"

What God commands Christians regarding alcohol is to avoid drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18). The Bible condemns drunkenness and its effects (Proverbs 23:29-35). Christians are also commanded to not allow their bodies to be "mastered" by anything (1 Corinthians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:19). Drinking alcohol in excess is undeniably addictive. Scripture also forbids a Christian from doing anything that might offend other Christians or encourage them to sin against their conscience (1 Corinthians 8:9-13). In light of these principles, it would be extremely difficult for any Christian to say he is drinking alcohol in excess to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Jesus changed water into wine. It even seems that Jesus drank wine on occasion (John 2:1-11; Matthew 26:29). In New Testament times, the water was not very clean. Without modern sanitation, the water was often filled with bacteria, viruses, and all kinds of contaminants. The same is true in many developing countries today. As a result, people often drank wine (or grape juice) because it was far less likely to be contaminated. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul instructed Timothy to stop drinking water exclusively (which was probably causing his stomach problems) and instead drink wine. In that day, wine was fermented (containing alcohol), but not necessarily to the degree it is today. It is incorrect to say that it was grape juice, but it is also incorrect to say that it was the same thing as the wine commonly used today. Again, Scripture does not forbid Christians from drinking beer, wine, or any other drink containing alcohol. Alcohol is not, in and of itself, tainted by sin. It is drunkenness and addiction to alcohol that a Christian must absolutely refrain from (Ephesians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 6:12).

Alcohol, consumed in small quantities, is neither harmful nor addictive for most people—the exception being those who struggle with addiction. Some doctors advocate drinking small amounts of red wine for its health benefits, especially for the heart. Consumption of small quantities of alcohol is a matter of Christian freedom. Drunkenness and addiction are sin. However, due to the biblical concerns regarding alcohol and its effects, due to the easy temptation to consume alcohol in excess, and due to the possibility of causing a brother to stumble, it is often best for a Christian to abstain from drinking alcohol.

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