



Today, we're jumping into a new series called "The Elephant in the Room." We often use this comical phrase to emphasize that we're not discussing the obvious. These "obvious" subjects are those everyone's talking about, and yet NO ONE is talking about them within the church context. Over the next several weeks, we will discuss some things that we would classify as elephants in the room when it comes to church because either they're a bit uncomfortable or they're complicated. We'll talk about priorities in your family, sexuality, money, and politics, just to name a few. Today, we're going to talk about alcohol.

Warm Up:

1. What's something big or small that happened this week that you're thankful for?

Discussion Questions:

2. What stood out to you the most from the sermon on Sunday?
3. What kind of relationship with alcohol did you have modeled for you growing up? How has this impacted you as an adult (as a parent)?

We all come into this message today from different perspectives. Some of you grew up in homes where alcohol was prevalent. Others of you grew up in homes where you were going to hell if you even looked at a bar as you drove by one.

4. What does our culture have to say about alcohol? How does that message differ from what the Bible says? See Ephesians 5:18, Proverbs 23:29-35 and Proverbs 20:1.

Culturally, we're bombarded with the message: "A drink makes everything better." On the other hand, when it comes to God's Word, we are told to "not get drunk," and we're warned (time and time again) of the dangers of alcohol.

Ephesians 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,"

Drunkenness isn't always a clear line – it's sometimes a fuzzy line. Is getting buzzed, drunk? Or is drunk only what would be past a certain amount if you were pulled over while driving? In other words, the Bible gives a clear line that is sometimes hard to determine when you're there. Pastor and Author Jonathan Pokluda said, "The line we are not to cross is getting drunk. Let me help you define this: when it feels better to swap than to stand still, you're most likely intoxicated. When you feel your body relax, and when you begin to feel anything as an effect of the alcohol (whether you call it 'a buzz,' 'tipsy,' or 'drunk'), something else is beginning to take control, and it is not the Holy Spirit."

Proverbs 23:29-35, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? ³⁰ Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. ³¹ Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. ³² In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. ³³ Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. ³⁴ You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ³⁵ “They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.”

Proverbs 20:1, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

5. It's tempting to believe that what we do with our bodies only affects us, but our choices have a collateral impact. (What one generation does in moderation, the next does in excess.) Read 1 Corinthians 8:9-13. How does Paul's example in this passage apply to our choices with alcohol? How does this mindset differ from the modern "you do you" narrative?

What we don't see in all of the marketing messages is the destructive nature of alcohol. Other than the tag “drink responsibly” attached to the end of each commercial or print advertisement, we see very little attention paid to the collateral damage left in the wake of alcohol abuse.

1 Corinthians 8:9-13, “But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹ And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹² Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”

Biblically speaking, when it comes to alcohol, we have freedom – other than the command not to get drunk. (Drunkenness is the clear line.) Suppose we apply Paul's teaching from 1 Corinthians 8 to alcohol. In that case, we'd be instructed to use our freedom to serve and love others rather than take advantage of our freedoms for ourselves.

What if we saw the freedom of personal choice through the lens of avoiding generational strongholds?

6. As mentioned in Sunday's sermon, the CDC released a study that found that 1 in 3 people are excessive drinkers, contributing to about 88,000 deaths in the US annually. How do these odds impact your view of alcohol? What does it mean that alcohol is more of a wisdom issue than a permissible issue?

You will not find a verse in the Bible that says do not ever, under any circumstance, drink alcohol, but there are lots of warnings about its consumption. As we've seen in Question 4 today, we're told that wine mocks the one who drinks it; it leads to a loss of judgment, self-control, and excessive indulgence.

Everybody wants to know this simple question – is it okay for me to drink? The right question is, “Is it wise for me to drink alcohol?” A few verses before Ephesians 5:18, which we read earlier about drunkenness, says, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise” (v15). What is wisdom? To walk carefully, not carelessly. Most people treat their relationship with alcohol carelessly. Many people approach alcohol with their kids carelessly. Proverbs describes it like a serpent ready to strike! Not one of you would hand your kids a snake that was about to bite them. Your kids will repeat what they see modeled, and the sad thing is that it often goes to the next level with them.

7. The topic of alcohol can bring up feelings of shame for those who have or are struggling with addiction; at the same time, this topic can lead others to adopt an attitude of judgment toward those who struggle in this particular area. What truths from the Word of God can help us to remain humble and loving when discussing this topic? How can we create an environment of grace and restoration for people struggling with alcohol addiction?

The topic of alcohol can be sensitive. We never know who has come through the struggle or might be in the middle. We need to have the heart of the father from the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) when it comes to those who are struggling or facing collateral damage from the abuse of alcohol. Let's be careful never to look down on others like the Pharisee did with the sinner in Luke 18:9-14. Let's be sure we're cultivating an environment in our small groups that allows others to share their burdens with us so that we can come alongside them and help bear them (Galatians 6:1-3).

8. How can we move toward obedience to God as a group and individuals in this area?

If you need help, we want you to contact one of our ministers or staff. We've created a confidential email that connects you with someone from our staff: help@crosschurch.com