



John on Jesus

Finding Grace
Small Group Work Sheet
June 10, 2012

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

If you have not made a schedule for your small groups to meet over the summer for fellowship and BBQ, create one.

Part 2 - Sermon Review

1. In the book of John, signs are more than just miracles. What makes a sign richer than a miracle?
2. Luke 7:34 tells us Jesus associated with people religious leaders, like the Pharisees, wouldn't touch. When it comes to social situations, do I look more like a Pharisee or Jesus?
3. Is it always wrong to drink alcohol? How is drinking today different from biblical times?
4. What did I learn about the character of Jesus through this miracle?
5. What is significant about the quantity and quality of the wine? What does it teach me about God's grace?
6. When I seek God's grace, do I seek it through Jesus? If not, begin today. Jesus is the funnel through which God's grace flows.

Part 3 - Digging Deeper - What The Bible Teaches About Wine-Drinking¹

The Bible says several things about the use of wine.

Drunkenness Is a Sin

Wine in the Bible was not to be used excessively, and one was not to become drunk with the fruit of the vine. In the Old Testament a drunkard was put to death (Deut. 21:20–21). Drunkenness was considered to be such an incorrigible sin that capital punishment was used for it as well as for murder, rape, blasphemy of parents, etc.

¹ Portions from *Bibliotheca Sacra*: A quarterly published by Dallas Theological Seminary. 1955–1995. Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary.

In both the Old and New Testaments God indicates that He hates drunkenness. According to 1 Corinthians 5:11, Christians are to separate themselves from a person who claims to be a Christian but who is a drunkard. Drunkards “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9–10), nor will homosexuals or other kinds of sinners. Practicing homosexuals and drunkards do not inherit the kingdom of God. Obviously God hates drunkenness. Paul also wrote in Ephesians 5:18, “Do not get drunk with wine.” and drunkenness is listed in Galatians 5:19–21 among “the deeds of the flesh.”

Drinking in Excess Is Wrong

“Woe to you who are complacent in Zion. You drink wine by the bowlful” (Amos 6:1, 6, NIV). Apparently cups were not large enough for those northern Israelites against whom Amos wrote. They drank so much that they had to drink from bowls. Over drinking leads to sexual perversion (Hab. 2:15). Those who drink too much will sooner or later be involved in things such as the prophet described here. King Xerxes and his servants over drank (Esther 1:10), and this led to the sexual perversion and shameful acts in which Queen Vashti refused to participate.

In addition drinking in excess results in a slowing of the thinking processes (Prov. 31:4–5; Isa. 28:7; Hos. 4:11); a stupor (Jer. 25:27; 51:39); sickness (Isa. 19:14; 28:7–8; Jer. 48:26); staggering (loss of balance and mental control) (Job 12:25; Isa. 28:7–8; 29:9); arrogance (Hab. 2:5); forgetfulness (Prov. 31:6–7); confusion and delirious dreams (Prov. 23:31, 33); sleepiness (Gen. 9:20–24; 19:33); lack of feeling (Prov. 23:31, 35); bloodshot eyes (Prov. 23:29–30); and poverty (Prov. 23:20–21).

Church Leaders Are To Be Moderate

An elder is not to be addicted to wine, and a deacon is not to be given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:3, 8). Obviously, if God had meant that they should drink no wine at all, He could have easily said that. These verses do not say that elders were not to have any wine. Clearly, church leaders in Paul’s day were to be moderate in the use of wine.

Wine Was Used as a Medicine

In the Bible, alcoholic beverages were recommended for medicinal purposes. Paul told Timothy, “Use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Tim. 5:23, NIV).

Is Wine Today Like New Testament Wine?

Many wine-drinking Christians today mistakenly assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today. This, however, is false. Wine in Homer’s day was twenty parts water and one part wine (*Odyssey* 9.208–9). Pliny referred to wine as eight parts water and one part wine (*Natural History* 14.6–54). According to Aristophanes, it was stronger: three parts water and two parts wine. Other classical Greek writers spoke of other mixtures: Euenos—three parts water, one part wine; Hesiod—three to one, water to wine; Alexis—four to one; Diocles and Anacreon—two to one; and Ion—three to one. The average was about three or four parts of water to one part of wine.

In ancient times not many beverages were safe to drink. In the ancient world water could be made safe in one of several ways. It could be boiled, but this was tedious and costly. It could

be filtered, but this was not a safe method. Wine could be put in the water to kill the germs—one part wine with three or four parts water.

Wine today has a much higher level of alcohol than wine in the New Testament. In fact in New Testament times one would need to drink twenty-two glasses of wine in order to consume the large amount of alcohol in two martinis today.

Though fermented wine was drunk in Bible times and though the Bible approved of wine-drinking, one needs to remember that the alcoholic content was much less than that of wine today.

Deciding About Wine-Drinking Today

How should one decide today whether or not to drink alcoholic beverages? Christians should carefully consider the following four questions.

What Are the Facts about Alcohol?

Before a person decides to drink or to continue drinking, he should be fully aware of the following facts about alcoholic beverages and their effects today.

1. An estimated ten million problem drinkers or alcoholics are in the United States adult population.
2. Of adults who drink, 36 percent can be classed as problem drinkers.
3. In addition, an estimated 3.3 million young people ages 14–17 are problem drinkers.
4. Alcohol-related deaths may run as high as 200,000 per year. In two years' time there are as many alcoholic-related deaths as there were in the entire Vietnam War!
5. Alcohol abuse and alcoholism cost the United States about \$50 billion in 1975. That figure has risen considerably since then.
6. Between 1966 and 1975 the percent of high school students who said they had been drunk increased from 19 percent to 45 percent.
7. Alcohol is one cause of cancer.
8. Fetal alcohol syndrome is the third greatest cause of birth defects.
9. Evidence exists that social drinking impairs one's social and intellectual capacities. Rather than getting sharper, people who drink get duller.
10. Half of all traffic fatalities and one-third of all traffic injuries are alcohol-related. Whereas a person has the legal right to drink, he does not have the right to endanger the lives of others on the highway by his drinking.
11. A high percentage of child-abusing parents have drinking problems.
12. A relatively high correlation exists between alcohol consumption and robbery, rape, assault, homicide; and more than one-third of suicides involve alcohol.
13. Taxpayers pay \$11 to offset each \$1 paid in liquor revenue.

Will Wine-Drinking Lead to Sin?

The Bible is not ambiguous about drunkenness. It is not unclear about over drinking. It is not equivocal about strong drink, but what does the Bible say about drinking moderate amounts of alcohol? First Corinthians 6:12 lays down a principle for borderline, questionable areas such as this. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable." So one must ask, Even if it is permissible, is it profitable? The same verse adds, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." In view of this, one must ask, Am I the master of it, or is it the

master of me? A person may think he is mastering his drinking, but if wine is something he must have, then it is mastering him.

Will Wine-Drinking Lead Anyone Else to Sin?

Christians are to be concerned not only about their own lives but also about others. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:4, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others." And Christians should seriously consider Romans 14:21: "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles." A believer should ask himself, "Will my drinking cause anyone else to sin? Even if it would not be a problem to me, is it possible that it would cause someone else to stumble?"

Can Wine-Drinking Be Done to the Glory of God?

Paul wrote, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). If a Christian cannot be praising God and glorifying Him while he is drinking, then it is not good for him, and it is not glorifying to God,