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# ALCOHOL

photo: cc Daniel Spiess

### WHAT'S THIS CHAPTER ALL ABOUT?



During the fall of 2004, I was a freshman and at my first ever frat party in college. I walked in the front door, and like cattle, was herded in a line as cups were being handed out. I wasn't really interested in drinking before I was 21, so I declined. A few girls around me followed suit. The "gentleman" handing out red plastic cups laughed, pointed left, and said, "sober corner's over there!" He moved down the line and we went to the corner. We talked amongst ourselves, getting to know one another and having fun. Not one guy from the fraternity spoke to the "sober corner" that night.

There is no doubt that alcohol is widely accepted and encouraged in Greek life. In many ways, the social calendar revolves around alcohol use. Greeks are becoming increasingly synonymous with throwing keggers and drunken escapades. I'm sure we all have stories of "that night" ruined by someone's (maybe even your own) alcohol use. Mine was when I got woken up at 3 am to go bail people I didn't know out of detox jail...because I was literally the only person under the roof of our sorority who could blow a 0.0 BAC. Or other nights, I watched my friends turn 21 and end up close to death after her 21 drinks in a short timespan. Not fun.

Through these experiences I really had to start thinking about differing opinions on alcohol use...was I going to start drinking or not? I needed to figure out God's views on handling alcohol, since I knew his ways would ultimately be for my good. Thus began my journey through Scripture on this sensitive topic.

"Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy."

-Benjamin Franklin...being misquoted.

He never really said that but I like that quote because I think there is some humor and truth within. From Puritan settlers to prohibition and to where we are today, we've had an interesting history with alcohol here in America. The Church has a moderate approach to this sensitive topic I think you'll find refreshing. Let's dive in.

## THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE

DISPOSES US TO AVOID EVERY KIND OF EXCESS

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
PARAGRAPH 2290

## WHAT INFLUENCES YOUR VIEWS ON ALCOHOL?

*Give them some time to read over silently*

In exploring varying attitudes about alcohol, there can be a few different camps where people form their views:

### Secular Statistics

Many secular organizations will use scare tactics on college students to freak people out about binge drinking, whether it be mock car crashes, deaths, student body-wide seminars, memorials for students' lives lost to alcohol, etc. People need to know this information and it has worked with some students on campus, but generally these scare tactics aren't helping college students use alcohol responsibly or safely.

### Puritanism

This is the solution that many people active in Christianity may take. The general attitude is that if you drink, you are disappointing to God and unspiritual. In order to be a "witness" to others, you ought to abstain from drinking altogether.

These approaches to helping people related with alcohol in a more healthy way are good but essentially are missing something. They miss the reasons behind why you or your friends are using alcohol. Again, the motives matter.

### Approval and Appreciation

"If I drink with them I can finally get their acceptance" or "I'm willing to break the law to get this group's approval."

### Emotional and Physical Comfort

"Getting drunk helps me to numb the pain, get rid of stress, or escape the problems in my life."

### Security and Control

"If I can get him/her drunk maybe they will want to make out with me or have sex with me" or "If I get myself drunk maybe it will make/turn me into a more likable or outgoing person."

### Influence and Power

"Drinking with this crowd will make me more popular."

How was your view of alcohol shaped growing up?

*Read questions aloud and discuss*

What influences your alcohol use or abstinence in college?

# FULLY ALIVE | ALCOHOL | GOD

## WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Read and discuss Ephesians 5:15-18

Read in Study

Ask Q's and discuss

How are being "filled with alcohol" and "filled with the Spirit" similar/different?

Paul is setting up a contrast here of two different types of people. What words/phrases are associated with each side?

Read and discuss Romans 13:1-2

Read in Study

Ask Q's and discuss

What can we take from this passage on government authority?

How does this apply to the drinking age in our nation and around the world?

"The virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess."

-The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2290

How does temperance apply to how we relate to alcohol, or anything else, really?

## LET'S GET PRACTICAL

*Read I-by-I, open for discussion, ask questions to direct convo*

Below are a few ways we can allow God to redeem our relationship with alcohol and to use it as the gift he intended it to be for his people:

### Respect the Law of the Land

As we read about earlier in 1 Corinthians, God calls us to obey our civil authorities (granted what they are asking of us is moral) so in applying this to alcohol, here in the United States, we are asked not to drink until the age of 21. While drinking in and of itself is not immoral and many people say, "I don't even get drunk," we still honor God by following this law in our homeland. Some states in the US actually have additional rules or exceptions to alcohol use of minors that you are free to embrace. Outside the country, in Italy for example, their drinking age is 18, so you can enjoy alcohol while visiting even if you are still a minor in the US.

### Moderation

Upon reaching legal age to drink alcohol wherever you are in the world, the use of moderation is essential in helping us enjoy alcohol as God intended. The virtue of temperance and not consuming alcohol, or anything else that could be misused for that matter, helps safeguard us from misusing the gift that it is.

### Be Considerate

If you are over 21 and planning to drink in moderation while with friends, think about who you are with and be considerate of their limitations or boundaries. "Everything is lawful," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is lawful," but not everything builds up. No one should seek his own advantage, but that of his neighbor." (1 Corinthians 10:23-24)

### Don't Slip into Puritanism

I have regrets that upon turning 21, I had a lot of fear with alcohol so I never drank with my sorority sisters...ever. I thought I would either scandalize them by having a beer or encourage them to drink in excess by my presence around their drinking. There is definitely prudence to be exercised in attending parties where underage binge drinking is going on, but I really missed opportunities to have a beer with my pledge sisters who were also over 21. I thought I was "witnessing" being a Christian by not drinking, but in all actuality I may have been a better witness by practicing moderation with alcohol with my friends.

### Don't Use Catholicism to Get Drunk

One of the things I love most about being Catholic is our ability to celebrate and participate in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this side of heaven, on Feast Days! I have seen some people take this out of context though, and abuse alcohol in the name of "celebrating" this or that holiday (St. Patrick's Day...cough cough). Monks still brew great beer to this day and the Church has a longstanding relationship with alcohol! But there is a danger in swinging to the other side of the pendulum, opposite from Puritans, with excessive "freedom" and just saying, "I'll go to Confession so it's not a big deal if I get wasted."