

YOU ASKED FOR IT

Life Group Leaders Guide

Directions

This packet contains all the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group. As a leader, everything on this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose and Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get some more background and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group.

Series Overview

You asked, we listened, and now we have answered! Over the next 4 weeks The Point Church will be studying what you wanted to study regarding our faith and difficult topics that arise in the life of a believer. We hope this *You Asked For It* series will give you information you seek, confidence in your faith, and comfort when interacting with the tough questions that are commonly asked on this side of eternity.

Life Group Overview

During the *You Asked For It* series our life group curriculum will cover different topics than what is mentioned from stage. The top four topics have been given stage time, and in an effort to cover as many topics as possible, the life group curriculum will cover other “hot” issues. We believe this format will allow for our people to cover more topics in a shorter amount of time. With your comfort in mind, the staff chose topics for life group that the bible speaks clearly on so you can boldly lean on God’s wisdom regarding the tough topics you will cover. With that said, this curriculum has purposefully come out earlier than normal so you can acclimate yourself with the topics. Please take special interest in the *Notes and Commentary* sections (specifically the links to blog posts, sermons, and articles) of the curriculum for great places to spend time preparing for each life group.

You Asked For It Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	6/18	SCIENCE --> The questions pertaining to science and its intersection with our faith.	What is a Christian?
Week 2	6/25	SEXUALITY --> The questions pertaining to sex and what the bible says about it.	What is God’s Will?
Week 3	7/2	EVIL --> The questions pertaining to the theology of evil, the demonic, and hell.	Can I Question God?
Week 4	7/9	CULTURE --> The questions pertaining to how our faith intersects with current culture.	Can I Drink Alcohol?

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

You Asked For It - Week 4 - Can I Drink Alcohol?

Purpose of Study

Every Christian, at some point in their walk, will need to make decisions regarding how their behavior intersects with their culture and how they engage with this world. Is it OK for a Christian to have a drink with friends after work or enjoy a glass of champagne at a wedding? Historically in America, alcohol has been a hot button issue leading to division in the church and alienation towards those that are outside of it. During this study we will approach this issue of alcohol, see what the bible has to say about it, and then diagnose how we can approach the issue of alcohol in a way that preserves unity.

Flow of Study

Optional Icebreaker: What is a food that you cannot stand to eat? Please describe why.

Disclaimer: Alcohol consumption is a varied and controversial topic amongst believers. In the spirit of unity, The Point wants to make clear that we do not take a formal stance on drinking alcohol in moderation. We neither condemn or commend those who choose to have a drink or those who choose abstain. The goal of this study is not to move a person who drinks towards abstinence or a person who abstains towards drinking but to move all believers towards Jesus. We believe that this topic can be one that breeds unity even amidst differing lifestyles and opinions. Before beginning the study please take note that there are real issues, past experiences, and deep, personal beliefs behind this issue. Because of this truth, please take a special interest in making this study one where everyone's opinion and life experiences are treated with respect.

Move #1: We will begin our study with a very simple answer to the question "does the bible permit the drinking of alcohol?" The simple answer is that it is not a simple answer because alcohol is described both as a gift and a danger.

1. **Note to the leader:** The study was designed for you to spend the majority of your conversation in Move 3. Move 1 and 2 are just to build a biblical background on alcohol and drinking. Because of this, it would be wise to move through the proof texts very quickly.

Read Psalm 104:14-15 (NIV) & Ecclesiastes 9:7 (NIV) --> ALCOHOL IS A GIFT

Alcohol is mentioned all throughout scripture but surprisingly, not in one place, does scripture forbid Christians to drink. Let's start by seeing some proof texts from where we get this truth from and to get a healthy view of alcohol.

¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth: ¹⁵ wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. (Psalm 104:14-15)

⁷ Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. (Ecclesiastes 9:7)

1. What stands out to you from these passages?
2. Looking at these passages, how is alcohol a gift from God?

3. How does viewing alcohol as a gift (and not a right or comfort) help someone handle it appropriately?

Read Luke 7:33-34 (NIV) --> JESUS DRANK ALCOHOL

³³ For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' ³⁴ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'

1. Here we see Jesus referring to his own drinking of alcohol. In other places we see him partake in the passover feast which included the drinking of fermented wine. Is the fact that Jesus partook in the drinking of alcohol proof that it is OK for the Christian to partake in?
 - a. 1 Peter 2:22 could be a helpful proof verse.

Read John 2:1-11 (NIV) --> JESUS AFFIRMED ALCOHOL IS A GIFT BY HIS FIRST MIRACLE

¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." ¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

1. Here we see Jesus' first miracle is the creation of wine for a wedding banquet. What does this say about Jesus' beliefs, and therefore what should be our beliefs, about alcohol?

Read 1 Timothy 5:23 (NIV) --> ALCOHOL'S MEDICINAL BENEFITS

²³ Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

1. Here the apostle Paul is giving advice to Timothy on how to cure an illness he is experiencing (most likely some form of diarrhea from the water which was common) which shows us that alcohol, used correctly, can benefit a person. Have you ever heard of any medicinal benefits of alcohol?
 - a. *Alcohol: Balancing Risks and Benefits* by the Harvard School of Public Health could be a beneficial and fair resource --> <https://goo.gl/HXxPmQ>

Move #2: Although scripture describes alcohol as a gift, it does give good warnings for what is an unhealthy use of alcohol. Let's look at some proof texts for how scripture approaches a healthy use of alcohol.

1. **Note to the leader:** The study was designed for you to spend the majority of your conversation in Move 3. Move 1 and 2 are just to build a biblical background on alcohol and drinking. Because of this, it would be wise to move through the proof texts very quickly.

Read Proverbs 20:1 (NIV)

¹ Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;
 whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Read Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Read Proverbs 23:29-35 (NIV)

²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
 Who has strife? Who has complaints?
 Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?
³⁰ Those who linger over wine,
 who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.
³¹ Do not gaze at wine when it is red,
 when it sparkles in the cup,
 when it goes down smoothly!
³² In the end it bites like a snake
 and poisons like a viper.
³³ Your eyes will see strange sights,
 and your mind will imagine confusing things.
³⁴ You will be like one sleeping on the high seas,
 lying on top of the rigging.
³⁵ "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt!
 They beat me, but I don't feel it!
 When will I wake up
 so I can find another drink?"

Read Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit

1. What stands out to you from these passages?
2. None of these passages forbid the drinking of alcohol, however, they definitely supply wisdom for drinking alcohol in excess. Were you surprised by anything that we read?
3. Why do you think drunkenness is such a large issue however the drinking of alcohol is not?
4. Besides alcohol, are there other areas of the Christian life where an action is not forbidden but expected to be treated with wisdom and temperance?

Move #3: Scripture never describes drinking alcohol in moderation as a sin, however, drinking until the point of drunkenness is a sin and therefore should be guarded against by Christians. However, just because something

is not sin does not mean it is right for everyone to partake in. There are people who should make a decision to never touch alcohol (ex: personal or family history of substance abuse or people under the age of 21). There are seasons of life where drinking alcohol should be put on hold (ex: during pregnancy, when kids are younger and impressionable, or during an illness where medication warns against it). In our last move tonight will be sifting through 3 passages that give wisdom to dealing with issues like alcohol consumption. In these passages, food and lust are the actions in question but the wisdom is still credible for pertaining to alcohol (or any other substance or thing that can be used inappropriately).

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 (NIV)

²³ “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. ²⁵ Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, ²⁶ for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” ²⁷ If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. ²⁹ I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? ³⁰ If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? ³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— ³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Let’s focus on verse 23. How can abstaining from drinking alcohol be considered constructive or beneficial to one’s life?
 - a. Examples: If you have a personal or family history of substance abuse, are pregnant, have impressionable children at home, or are on medication that warns against alcohol use, not using alcohol would be very beneficial to one’s life and witness.
3. What is Paul’s motivation for partaking or not partaking in certain freedoms (verse 24)?
4. How as Christians can we take the good of others seriously in regard to our alcohol consumption?

Read Romans 14:1-21 (NIV)

¹ Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ² One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand. ⁵ One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶ Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸ If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹ For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. ¹³ Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. ¹⁴ I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. ¹⁵ If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. ¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. ²⁰

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. ²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Drinking or not drinking alcohol is a personal decision, however, it should never cause disunity. Reread verse 3. Have you seen drinking or not drinking cause improper judgement amongst believers?
3. Reread verse 13-15. In regards to alcohol, what does it look like to protect against stumbling blocks?
4. Can you think of a situation where a Christian who is comfortable drinking alcohol should abstain for the good of another?
5. Can you think of a situation where a Christian who is comfortable not drinking alcohol should partake for the good of another?
6. Reread verse 19. What does it look like for a believer to "make every effort for peace and mutual edification?"

Read Matthew 5:29-30 (NIV)

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. This passage is reflecting on lust and adultery but how is it also fitting for alcohol usage?
3. How would a Christian know when alcohol has caused them to "stumble?"
4. If a Christian is having trouble with a healthy approach to alcohol, how is completely cutting it out of their life instead of temperance probably beneficial in the long run?

Prayer: End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

Next Steps: The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

1. Challenge your people to develop their own personal philosophy on alcohol use and how that will look for them and their family. Challenge them begin praying about that this week.
2. There are 2 articles in the *Notes and Commentary* section. Send them to your members and challenge them to read them this week. The Point does not stand by either article or their authors but thought they were interesting “food for thought.”

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

Articles About the Church and Alcohol

- *The Curious Case of Christians and Alcohol* by Benjamin Sledge --> <https://goo.gl/eWtR25>
- *Why I Gave Up Alcohol* by D.L. Mayfield --> <https://goo.gl/RBQZhv>

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

- For Paul the death of Christ, in which he gave himself “for us,” is not only God’s offer of pardon for sinners, but also the only proper model of discipleship. Hence “freedom” does not mean “to seek my own good”; it means to be free in Christ in such a way that one can truly seek to benefit and build up another person. (Fee)

Romans 14:1-21

- Paul’s supreme concern in this passage is the danger of so clearing your own path that you end up making it impossible for your neighbours to walk down theirs. It is all too easy, in sorting out our own lives and finding our own way forward as Christians, to make things harder, not easier, for those around us. Since one of the basic Jewish and Christian images for what we call ‘behaviour’ is that of ‘walking’, a natural way of describing these difficulties is the one Paul highlights in verse [13](#): the danger of putting ‘obstacles’ or ‘stumbling blocks’—things that will trip people up—in each other’s way. So, he says with deliberate humour, don’t pass judgment on each other—but do use your judgment in not tripping each other up! Just as it is vital for every Christian to make up his or her mind about things which are, as we saw in the previous passage, ‘indifferent’—things about which Christians can legitimately differ—so it is vital that, when we have done so, our main concern is then not for ourselves but for those around us. Other people may well be at a different point in the Christian life, and may still be struggling with their conscience over things which we believe to be perfectly good in themselves. (Wright)
- The way forward is to recognize that things can and do become unclean, or even evil, not because of what they are in themselves but because of how people regard them. This is rather like saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and it’s obviously not a principle which can be applied to all ethical questions and situations. Paul is talking specifically about what people eat and drink, in a context where

that was very contentious. We have to use wise judgment ourselves, as we saw in the previous passage, as to which of today's issues come into the picture at this point. What he says in verse [14](#) is that food can and does become unclean—at the point at which someone considers it so; and, in verse [20](#), that it can and does become evil (a stage beyond 'unclean') if when you eat it you cause someone else to trip up. This whole passage is, in fact, looking one way in the argument. It is an appeal to people who are happy to eat and drink anything at all. It is asking them to recognize that there are occasions when they need to hold back from this freedom for the sake of those whose Christian faith would be irreparably damaged by such behaviour. (Wright)

Matthew 5:29-30

- Early in church history, people such as Origen of Alexandria wrongly took the sayings here and in [19:12](#) literally. Jesus is not advocating physical self-mutilation, but through dramatic figures of speech indicates the kind of rigorous self-discipline that committed disciples will display. A person who intends to carry out God's ordinance should be willing to go to any lengths to maintain the unity of the bond of marriage. Sin is essentially an inner issue and condemns the person who rests complacently on his or her external acts of righteousness. Our actions indicate the state of our hearts, and one who destroys the marriage bond is worthy of eternal condemnation, because the sin reveals that he or she is not a disciple of Jesus. Life in the kingdom of heaven does not produce otherworldly persons, but disciples who live out human relations, including marriage, the way God originally designed. (Wilkins)