

As elders who serve The Point Community Church, we have both primary issues on which we are unwavering, and secondary issues on which we allow a range of diversity. This perspective enables unity without uniformity. We hold our essential distinctives in a closed hand; this includes, for example, reformed theology, Christ-like male leadership in the home and church, and commitment to church planting. We hold secondary issues in an open hand; this includes charismatic gifts, eschatology, and various areas of Christian liberty, such as alcohol.

Because our position on alcohol is one that can be easily misunderstood and/or misrepresented, this statement is our attempt to clarify the position of the elders on the issue of alcohol, as we understand the teaching of Scripture.

**First**, we believe that all drunkenness is a sin (Deuteronomy 21:20; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Matthew 24:29; Luke 12:45; 21:34; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 6:10; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 4:3). **Secondly**, we believe that many horrendous sins are affiliated with drunkenness. Therefore, getting drunk is a sin that can lead to other sins, such as incest (Genesis 19:32–35), violence (Proverbs 4:17), adultery (Revelation 17:2), mockery and brawling (Proverbs 20:1), poverty (Proverbs 21:17), late night and early morning drinking (Isaiah 5:11–12), hallucinations (Isaiah 28:7), foolish behavior (Isaiah 5:22; Jeremiah 51:39), murder (2 Samuel 11:13), vomiting (Jeremiah 25:27; 48:26; Isaiah 19:14), staggering (Jeremiah 25:27; Psalm 107:27; Job 12:25), madness (Jeremiah 51:7), shameful nakedness (Habakkuk 2:15; Lamentations 4:21), sloth (Joel 1:5), escapism (Hosea 4:11), and depression (Luke 21:34). In summary, sin leads to death and the sin of drunkenness produces only death and misery.

**Thirdly**, we believe that Christian leaders are to live their lives in such a way as to set a positive example of holiness for others to emulate (Hebrews 13:7). This includes elders, the male senior leaders in the church, who are not to be drunkards (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).

**Fourthly**, we do believe that all Christians must at varying times and in varying ways give up some of their Christian liberties in order to love people of weaker conscience. Christians must make every effort to not lead them into sin by exercising freedoms in their presence (Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 10:31–32).

**So**, there are different views on alcohol in our church. We recognize that this is an issue where Christians can and do disagree, so we have no position on alcohol other than that people should have their conscience captive to the word of God, Biblically submit to the leadership of the church and do everything for God's glory.

**With this in mind, the elders have determined that:**

- We cannot and will not teach that drinking alcohol in moderation is a sin. There is no Biblical support for this position whatsoever.
- The leadership and membership of the church is permitted to drink alcohol responsibly and within the boundaries of Scripture.
- We will not serve alcohol at official church functions and we ask that alcohol not be served in/at community groups during regular group setting and time. This is mainly due to the legal liabilities that could arise.
- We may determine to use both wine and juice in communion as part of our worship gatherings. This is the standard of scripture and is an accepted church practice. Before we do this, we will discuss this with the membership before doing so, seeking input and feedback. *See addendum to this document.*

Alcohol is a secondary matter and we pursue unity on this issue. It's *A* thing and we will not make it *THE* thing. We respect the right of Christians, churches, organizations, and denominations to arrive at differing conclusions on this matter. So long as they are within the boundaries of Scripture, we respect those positions and welcome faithful Christians holding them into the membership of The Point Community Church. Together we can pursue what is most important—the expansion of God's kingdom through the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Addendum: Specifically regarding the use of wine at communion:**

We do believe there are some compelling reasons to offer both wine and juice. Regardless of whether we offer wine or not, we will still offer grape juice for those who as matters of conscience or health choose not to drink wine.

Both the frequency of celebration and the use of wine are matters of liberty in the Bible. That is, we don't have a binding statement in the New Testament that tells us how often we should celebrate the Lord's Supper; nor does the Bible explicitly say we must use wine along with bread.

Our reasoning is based on an understanding that when Christ "took a cup" (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23, Luke 22:17), he took a cup of wine (or "fruit of the vine" Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25, Luke 22:17), which was used during the Passover feast he and his disciples were celebrating. The use of wine for the Lord's Supper wasn't disputed for the first 1,800 years (or so) of church history. It wasn't until the nineteenth century temperance movement in the United States that grape juice became an acceptable substitute for wine.

Wine isn't evil; it is a gift from God. Jesus, a master wine-maker (John 2:10), will serve "well-aged" wine at the banquet to be held when he returns and is known as king over all the nations (Isaiah 25:6-8). The Lord's Supper points to that feast. The cup we drink, we drink in anticipation of that day when we will raise and drink from our wine-filled glasses in celebration of the victory of our king.

We have seriously considered the fact that we have recovering alcoholics in our congregation. For those who are saved in our church, their recovery does not depend on never being around alcohol, but on their treasuring Christ above all else. That being said, there is wisdom we exercise in having parties with these people, where it's not as 'controlled' an environment as the Lord's Table.

It is a theologically incorrect to blame drunkenness on the alcohol rather than the person choosing to drink more than they should. Drunkenness was a problem in Corinth (I Cor. 11) and Paul doesn't commend the switch to grape juice or blame the wine for it. We should be careful to remember (and teach) that we are not better if we do not drink, nor the worse if we do (I Cor. 8:8).

The problem with only serving grape juice (long term) out of fear of sending alcoholics on a binge is that it calls into question both Jesus' and Paul's judgment. If we treat wine like it is a sin, we put ourselves above the scriptures. The puritan's said that alcohol is "God's good gift," and we should neither abuse it nor look at it like kids look at green vegetables.

The weakest argument would be that wine in Jesus' day was unfermented. This just reveals ignorance and an unwillingness to submit to the reliability of Scripture.

Jesus did not pick up a goblet of water and say, "This is my blood." Nor did he baptize with wine. Both elements have symbolic and spiritual significance, water representing cleansing and wine, among other things, as a picture of blessing.

There is danger in getting legalistic about the form, but there's also danger in getting dismissive in something Paul points out is a "participation in the blood of Christ," and a proclamation of the Lord's death, and to do so "in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord" perhaps drinking judgment on himself.