

FOR GOD'S SAKE GROW UP

CONNECT BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING

- If you knew you had only one meal left to eat, what would it be?
- Growing up, how did your family tend to think about or partake of food and drink?
- Pertaining to substances, how would you define excess?

TRUTH UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING

We constantly fill our bodies and minds with substances—some good, some bad, and some neutral. Those that are good are meant to illustrate our need for God and his provision (food, water, etc.). Others are categorically harmful for us, and others still are in themselves neutral, but can be very easily abused. While tempting, it is really fruitless to have a conversation about what is permissible or not, or how much is too much. Paul is more directly addressing our hearts in this matter, showing us that the brokenness inside of each of us, and the world around us, can cause us to seek out the false promises for relief through consumption, rather than in Christ alone.

THE CONTROL AND ESCAPE PROMISED BY SUBSTANCES...

READ: Ephesians 5:15-17

DISCUSS: What are the contrasting ideas that Paul is highlighting in these verses?

Paul is exhorting the Ephesians with a parallel set of ideas. On the one hand, we see the commands to “Look carefully how you walk,” being wise, and “understand[ing] the will of the Lord...” On the other hand, we see the implied failure to carefully consider how one walks, being unwise, and being foolish. Paul’s point really is that our full attention will be needed in order to properly navigate the false promises of the substances with which we can fill our bodies and minds.

...ARE POOR IMITATIONS OF WHAT IS PROMISED IN CHRIST

READ: Ephesians 5:18-21

DISCUSS: What are the outcomes of being drunk? What are the outcomes of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

One can either be filled with—i.e. controlled by—food, drink, or other chemical substances, or be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. It does not appear that one can do both. The false promise of substances is enjoyment, but ultimately, that experience terminates on the substance itself. Rather, being led by the Holy Spirit produces a worship of God, not slavery to substances. This worship—“making melody to the Lord with your heart”—promises deep joy and real life change.

GRACE

SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

It cannot be overstated—God is not a killjoy. God actually cares more about our joy in its purest and holiest form than we can even conceive. We celebrate the Eucharist with bread and wine in order to commemorate Christ’s death for our eternal salvation. God celebrates at the end of time with his children in a feast of untold proportions. God’s grace rests firmly upon our wrong views or wrong practices regarding substances. This also means that his grace rests upon how dysfunctional our lives can look with regard to them—addiction, abuse, eating disorders, and on and on—God gives more grace than we can ever imagine in order that even our experience of our bodies can produce joy, worship, and love for him.

CHANGE

APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

- Do you tend more often toward control or escape with regard to your experience of substances?
- What would it mean for you to be brave and trust God’s promises for your joy?
- How can your group practically stand with you as you take steps to obey God in your experience of substances?

PRAYER

RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Pray that God would help us to see our bodies and our experiences of substances in truth, and humility to ask for help where it is needed.
- Pray for joy in God and the changing power of the Gospel.