Wine in Communion: Series Summary and Q&A

Between March and September 2026, High Point hosted a series of lectures and follow-up podcasts on intoxicating substances. It started with a practical question in front of our church, whether to offer wine in Communion, and grew into a broader study of sobriety, Christian freedom, and the substances people reach for today. This summary brings those conversations together for anyone preparing for the congregational meeting, including those who weren't able to attend.

In brief

The proposal before the congregation is to offer wine *alongside* grape juice in Communion and let each person choose according to conscience. The series on intoxicating substances grounded that proposal in a simple biblical conviction: wine is a good gift from God, and Scripture always condemns drunkenness. The elders will gather input at the November meeting, and the congregation is scheduled to vote in March.

If you only have a few minutes, here is where the series landed:

- Scripture treats wine as a gift that "gladdens human hearts" (Psalm 104:14–15, NIV). What it condemns is drunkenness, especially as a habit.
- No one is required to drink. Timothy drank only water, and Paul respected that (1 Timothy 5:23).
- Christian freedom comes with questions attached. Is this beneficial? Will it master me? (1 Corinthians 6:12)
- We should never pressure anyone to act against their conscience. Paul also refused to let fear or legalism set the rules for everyone (Galatians 2:11–14).
- The church used wine for about 1,900 years. Many American churches switched to grape juice during the temperance era, a little over a century ago, and total abstinence as a Christian position only appeared in the 1800s.
- Wine is the element Jesus chose, and it carries meaning from Passover all the way to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Pastor Nic doesn't see juice as an equal substitute, but he is clear that taking it for reasons of conscience is a full act of worship.
- No one in recovery will be asked to drink wine.

- Later sessions applied the same thinking to marijuana, nicotine, GLP-1 drugs, and psychiatric medications. A recurring theme: a substance can bring relief, but relief alone doesn't heal.
- Pastor Nic has said his deeper hope is for the church to come through this disagreement more mature, holding firmer convictions with less judgment of one another.

The sessions

Session	Month	Presenters	Focus
Part I	Mar. 2026	Pastor Nic Gibson, Monte Knetter	What Scripture says about wine and drunkenness
Part II	Mar. 2026	Pastor Nic, with Monte, Dr. Bill Hefner, and Jill	Interpreting Scripture for today; the Communion proposal
Part III	Apr. 2026	Dr. Bill Hefner, Jill	Alcohol, marijuana, nicotine, and GLP-1 drugs
Part III follow-up	May 2026	Pastor Nic, Monte, Dr. Hefner, Jill	Listener questions; the "grape juice" argument
Conclusion	Aug. 2026	Pastor Nic, Jill	Psychiatric medications and Christian discernment
Conclusion follow-up	Sept. 2026	Pastor Nic, Monte, Dr. Hefner, Jill	When medication helps; looking back; next steps

Summaries of each session follow, then seven companion articles from the Substance Substack and a set of questions and answers. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version (NIV).

Part I: What the Bible says about wine

The first lecture, led by Pastor Nic Gibson and Monte Knetter and followed by a live panel, laid out what Scripture actually says. Two conclusions shaped everything that came after.

First, the Bible treats wine as a wholesome gift. In the Torah especially, wine and other fermented drinks appear as blessings tied to worship and celebration. Monte's shorthand stuck with people: "Wine is from God; drunkenness is from the devil."

Second, drunkenness is never presented as anything but harmful. It is sinful, it deceives, and it tends to get worse over time, which is why biblical writers use it as a picture of sin itself.

The stated aim of the series was practical. Its organizers wanted to help people make wise, obedient decisions about intoxicating substances that honor Christ, love the church, and offer a good witness to the world.

The file for Part I included only the episode description, so this section draws on that description and on the recap at the start of Part II.

Part II: From the text to today

Part II dealt with interpretation, or hermeneutics: how do we get from what the Bible says about wine to what our church should do now? Pastor Nic suggested three questions. What other biblical principles apply? What is different about our setting, and what has stayed the same? And how do reason, tradition, and experience shape our reading, with Scripture remaining the primary voice?

Other principles that apply

He named six. God gives us everything for our enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17). Sobriety is central to the Christian life, and in the New Testament the words for "sober" and "self-controlled" are nearly interchangeable (1 Thessalonians 5:5–9). Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, which affects everything we put in them, right down to sugar and caffeine (1 Corinthians 6:12–20; Philippians 1:21–22). And liberty is real, but it has to be weighed. Does this indulge the flesh or cover up sin? Is it truly good for me and for others? Will it master me?

The last two principles concern other people and our health. No exercise of freedom should damage someone else's faith (1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14), because a fellow believer's faith is worth more than gold (1 Peter 1:7). Pastor Nic stressed that "stumbling" in Scripture means falling away from the faith, which is much more serious than feeling uncomfortable. Finally, abstaining is fine, and so is accepting medical help. Paul respected Timothy's habit of drinking only water until his health required a change (1 Timothy 5:23).

Where the “weaker brother” principle stops

There is a limit. If the most anxious person always decides, Pastor Nic warned, a church can slowly lose the gospel itself. Paul confronted Peter publicly when outside pressure began to undermine the gospel (Galatians 2:11–14). Paul also worked to become “all things to all people” in order to reach them, which took serious self-discipline (1 Corinthians 9:19–27). And he described the more restrictive conscience as “weak.” A believer can ask others to hold back, but in doing so admits that this is an area to grow in.

Then and now

Changed since Bible times	Has not changed
Many modern intoxicants are far more potent	Human nature
We have scientific information they lacked	The nature of wine itself
Clean water, pasteurization, and refrigeration exist	Drunkenness has always been around
Alcohol is no longer a unique medicine	Scripture never banned alcohol because of its misuse
We have many other safe drinks	The principles above
Our culture puts less emphasis on building virtue	

One argument people often make is that now that we have clean water and pasteurized juice, God wouldn’t want us using wine. Pastor Nic called that reasonable but speculative, since other conclusions are reasonable too. When Christians are making judgment calls, he said, we shouldn’t condemn those who land somewhere else.

Tradition, experience, and science

Our own history actually holds two traditions that conflict: roughly 1,900 years of wine paired with a firm rejection of drunkenness, and a little over a century of temperance-era grape juice. Pastor Nic was careful to say that neither group acted in bad faith.

Experience varies too. Some of us have only good memories around alcohol. Others have lived through addiction, broken families, or the loss of someone to a drunk driver, and those stories deserve a sympathetic hearing.

As for science, moderate drinking shows no clear health benefit and no clear harm. People prone to heavy drinking are more vulnerable to its effects, and young people are more susceptible to misuse.

The proposal

Pastor Nic closed with his own conclusion. He proposed restoring wine to Communion, the church's historic practice, with juice offered alongside it so that each person can choose according to conscience. In his view, wine and juice aren't interchangeable, because wine carries symbolic weight that is central to the Lord's Supper.

He also shared a personal view on wider church life. He favors as few policies as possible, thinks a glass of wine or champagne at weddings is reasonable, and sees good sense in keeping alcohol out of congregational feasts because so many children attend. He presented all of this as his own reading, for the congregation to weigh together.

Part III: "Respectable" substances

In Part III, Dr. Bill Hefner, a family physician, and Jill, a counselor, applied the same biblical framework to alcohol, marijuana, nicotine, and GLP-1 weight-loss drugs. They called these "respectable" substances, borrowing from Jerry Bridges's book *Respectable Sins*, because our culture accepts them without much thought.

Their central point was that substances offer quick relief from pain but don't build lasting resilience. Pain relief isn't wrong, Jill said; it just isn't the whole answer. She invited everyone to consider a personal question: *What kind of pain am I most tempted to escape?*

They also explained the role of dopamine. Pleasure and motivation are part of God's design, but intoxicating substances spike dopamine in a way that builds tolerance and can eventually master us (1 Corinthians 6:12). Natural sources like exercise and sunlight give a steadier reward. Jill pointed out that most people who use these substances never become addicted, and she encouraged the church to welcome people who struggle without adding shame (Matthew 9:10–13).

For any substance, they suggested a simple process. Notice what the culture assumes. Look at what the evidence actually says. Then ask what is wise, what is loving, and what freedom in Christ allows. Underneath all of it sits one more question: *Am I using this to self-medicate?*

What the research shows

Substance	What Dr. Hefner shared	Counsel
Alcohol	The most widely used and misused intoxicant in the U.S., and a Group 1 carcinogen. Linked to about 178,000 U.S. deaths a year, two-thirds from long-term use. Roughly 10–17.5% of regular drinkers develop an alcohol use disorder. Use is rising among women ages 25–64.	No alcohol during pregnancy or in recovery. After 65, no more than one drink a day. Exercise appears to offset some risk from moderate drinking. Keep alcohol at home secured so children can't reach it.
Marijuana (THC)	Today's THC runs 17–30% potency, up from 1–2% in the 1960s and 1970s. About 9% of daily users develop a use disorder. There is strong evidence of harm to developing brains and little quality evidence that it treats anxiety or PTSD.	No THC before age 25. Using it nightly for stress will likely lead to dependence. Edibles look like children's vitamins and need to be locked up. CBD doesn't intoxicate, and its benefits for anxiety are anecdotal.
Nicotine	Highly addictive and reaches the brain in 7–10 seconds. Vaping is rising among young people, and at least a quarter of young e-cigarette users vape daily.	Vapes and pouches aren't harmless. They still affect the heart, healing, oral health, and adolescent brain development.
GLP-1 drugs	Not intoxicants, but about one in eight U.S. adults now takes one. They are an effective first-line treatment for type 2 diabetes. Most users regain weight after stopping.	They can enable eating disorders, and they work best alongside real changes in habits.

The follow-up podcast

In a follow-up episode, Pastor Nic, Monte Knetter (who chairs the elder board), Dr. Hefner, and Jill took listener questions. Dr. Hefner said GLP-1 drugs aren't "cheating" and can jump-start healthier habits, though up to about 70% of people regain the weight within a year of stopping if nothing else has changed. Pastor Nic pushed back on the idea that

explaining an addiction excuses it. Its roots deserve compassion and care, but understanding why we do something doesn't change whether it's right. Healing, Jill added, takes agency and discipline (Hebrews 12:12–13).

The group also talked about social anxiety, and their suggestions were practical: plan a short break during a hard event, take small steps while still nervous, learn good manners, prepare for the questions you know are coming, and ask people about themselves. As Dr. Hefner noted, you can't really be present with people if you show up high or drunk.

On psychedelics, the panel was direct. What people experience is the substance, not God, and Scripture calls us to be filled with the Spirit rather than intoxicated (Ephesians 5:18). On dementia, heavy drinking, especially in middle age, acts as a neurotoxin, while small amounts alongside a healthy lifestyle showed no measurable harm. Family history matters, but genes aren't destiny.

What they said about wine

Several presenters said that studying Scripture changed their own minds. They expected a more negative picture of wine and found something else: a blessing used in worship and allowed even for festival celebrations (Deuteronomy 14:26). At Cana, Jesus made well over a hundred gallons.

The panel also took up an argument some people grew up hearing, that biblical "wine" was really grape juice. That claim dates to early twentieth-century fundamentalism. "New wine" was simply that year's vintage, sweeter and lower in alcohol but still fermented, and Scripture plainly says wine can make people drunk. Distilled liquor is a different matter, since it didn't exist in the biblical world. Pastor Nic wouldn't forbid it, but he is comfortable with Christians treating it more cautiously than wine or beer.

Pastor Nic spoke with real sympathy for those who object to wine in Communion. Many are in recovery, minister to people with addictions, or come from places where alcohol did terrible damage. High Point spans generations and cultures. One member who came to faith in Germany found grape juice in Communion odd, while a member from Romania called this the biggest issue they had faced at the church. His aim, he said, is "classical Protestant evangelicalism": going back to what Scripture actually says and being willing to be corrected by it. Studying it made him more positive toward wine than he expected and more careful on a few points, including the fact that the Bible never requires anyone to drink.

Conclusion: Medications and Christian discernment

The final lecture turned to the most widely used mind-altering substances in our culture: psychiatric medications. Dr. Hefner couldn't attend, so Pastor Nic and Jill led it. They set aside the usual yes-or-no question and asked a different one: How do Christians practice discernment in a culture that treats suffering as a disease and tends to manage symptoms instead of pursuing healing?

They offered a few questions for any decision. What is the real problem? Is this a solution or a quick fix? What could the unintended effects be? Am I deciding out of faith or out of fear? They also cautioned against the easy positions people tend to fall into, from "just give me meds" to "pray harder and you won't need them."

Scripture treats suffering as normal and even formative (James 1:2–4; Romans 5:3–5), and it describes healing as something that happens in community, through prayer, confession, and support (James 5:13–16). Drawing on psychiatrist Joanna Moncrieff, the presenters argued that most psychiatric drugs work differently than insulin does for a diabetic. Instead of correcting a measurable imbalance, they create an altered state, which may or may not help.

They believe these drugs are overprescribed overall and pointed to industry incentives such as direct-to-consumer advertising, which only the United States and New Zealand allow. Even so, they insisted that each person's situation deserves its own careful thought. On one point they were firm: never stop a psychiatric medication abruptly. Tapering should be supervised, and quitting benzodiazepines (or alcohol, for a heavy drinker) too quickly can be fatal.

Sobriety, reframed

Pastor Nic suggested that biblical sobriety asks whether a state of mind helps us live a godly life. Sometimes medication actually creates sobriety. For someone with severe bipolar mania or paranoia, it may restore the clarity needed to live well, and taking it could even be the morally right choice. Other times a drug takes away distress and moral desire along with it, and that isn't sobriety at all. Because "everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23), taking a medication in good conscience can be a faithful decision.

The final podcast

In the last episode, the team wanted to be clear that none of them are against medication, science, or therapy. They named several situations where they would encourage someone to consider medication: depression or anxiety so overwhelming that a person can't function, conditions with a strong inborn component like schizophrenia or some forms of bipolar disorder, severe withdrawal from drugs like heroin, and serious insomnia caused by distress. For a struggling child, it can be a reasonable trade-off for parents to weigh. Their advice was to try simpler steps first, keep asking whether a medication is actually helping, and make the decision alongside other people. The church will not discipline anyone or question their faith for taking medication.

Pastor Nic also offered a way to think about any substance. Does it change my state of mind in a way that makes sin more likely, weakens my ability to resist temptation, tends toward habit, or harms my health? By that measure, a cup of coffee usually passes and heavy drinking doesn't. Scripture's sharpest warnings are aimed at habitual drunkenness, and two Christians who love God equally can make different choices here without judging each other (Romans 14).

Looking back

Asked whether the series accomplished what they hoped, the presenters admitted that most people seemed to keep the views they started with. All four said their own thinking changed. Dr. Hefner grew up in a home where no one drank, with an alcoholic grandfather. He now sees alcohol as a gift of God's common grace that calls for self-control. He isn't sure whether he'll take the wine himself, but he said he won't look down on anyone for either choice.

Pastor Nic came back to conscience. Choosing juice for a real reason, such as recovery, ministry to people who struggle with alcohol, or a deeply held conviction, is holy, he said, and God is able to bless it. Wine is still the element Jesus chose. His larger hope, though, was never only about the cup. He wanted the church to work through a disagreement on what he considers a fairly minor issue and come out more mature, surer of its convictions and gentler toward those who see it differently.

What happens next

1. At the November congregational meeting, the elders will ask what would help people prepare, such as town halls or coffee with elders.
2. Those conversations will happen over the winter.

3. The congregation is scheduled to vote at the March meeting.

An edited version of the full series paper is planned for the church website, and sections are being posted on the Substance Substack (see Sources).

From the Substack articles

Seven companion articles on the Substance Substack expand on the series in writing. Most of them come back to the same idea: Scripture is less concerned with the substance itself than with sobriety, a watchful and purposeful life under Christ. The two most relevant to the Communion vote come first.

"The Disease Model, Addiction, and Church Life: What About Causing Our Brother to Stumble?"

This article speaks most directly to the vote. It asks what a church should do when one of the elements of the Lord's Supper could cause someone to stumble. The answer starts with a definition: in Scripture, to stumble is to be led into sin or against one's conscience, which is different from being offended (Colossians 2:16–17).

The article recommends keeping juice and thinking carefully about how each cup is offered, so that choosing juice is easy and draws no attention. It notes that the Lord's Supper is a gathering centered on Christ, with alcohol playing no central role, and that Christian community itself guards against addiction, which tends to grow in isolation. When some Corinthians got drunk at the Lord's Supper, Paul corrected them and called the church to examine itself, but he kept the elements the same (1 Corinthians 11:20–34). The article also affirms abstaining as a legitimate choice, pointing to Timothy and to the Nazirite vow. Maturity isn't measured by how much of a good thing we can handle, and one person's choice shouldn't become a verdict on someone else's.

"Alcohol: The Consensus from Church History," by Monte Knetter

Monte's survey makes a historical case. For nearly two thousand years, he writes, every major Christian theologian affirmed that alcohol is good, condemned drunkenness, and counseled moderation. Calls for total abstinence only appeared in the nineteenth century.

He draws examples from every era. Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, both known for their austerity, defended wine. When some Christians in Antioch wished wine away because of drunkenness, Chrysostom answered, "Not the wine, but the intemperance of such as take an evil delight in it." The one early group that replaced wine

with water in Communion, the Encratites, did so because they rejected the goodness of creation, and the church condemned them as heretics. Thomas Aquinas commended moderate drinking, Luther brewed his own beer, and Calvin received wine as part of his pay. The Puritan Increase Mather put it this way: “The gift of wine is from God, but the slavery of the Drunkard is from the Devil.”

Monte also challenges the common claim that people drank wine only because the water was unsafe. Ancient people mixed their wine with water, and most had access to clean springs, rivers, and wells. He concludes that Christians should receive alcohol as God’s gift and not forbid moderate use, while using it with discernment and love for their neighbors.

“Sobriety and the Christian Life”

Scripture gives one direct command about intoxicants: don’t get drunk. Beyond that, this article argues, most Christian practice is a matter of wisdom. Sobriety keeps us alert to the devil, who “prowls around like a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8–10), and it is what faithful stewardship requires. Jesus uses a drunken servant as his picture of someone who squanders a trust (Luke 12:42–46). The article concludes that the church’s main goal should be forming people of spiritual sobriety and vigilance, more than attaching a stigma to substances.

“Beyond ‘Does It Cause Harm?’: A Philosophy of Intoxicating Substances”

Most people today judge actions by asking whether anyone gets hurt, and they think of themselves first as independent individuals. This article argues that neither assumption is enough for Christians, and that a simple list of rules falls short too. It proposes four questions instead. Is there a command from a rightful authority? What do I owe the people around me? Does this fit who I am and what I’m called to? Is this a setting where I can use my freedom well?

Its example sticks in the mind. A long evening with friends talking about life and faith, with no one getting drunk, might involve more drinks than an expert would recommend. Two beers alone in front of Netflix stays within the guidelines yet may serve no good purpose at all. The practical advice: use less than you think is reasonable.

“Intoxication and Pursuing Godliness”

This article ties sobriety to purpose. God made us to bear his image, do fruitful work, build families, make disciples, grow in godliness, and love others, and every one of those callings takes a clear head. Habitual intoxication stunts growth, the article argues, because maturity requires facing exactly what intoxication helps us avoid: boredom, fear, grief, quiet, and honest self-examination. Avoidance tends to start as an excuse, become a coping mechanism, and harden into a shell. The article opens with Odysseus refusing the lotus because he knew where he was headed, and it suggests that people with a clear sense of purpose are better able to resist distraction.

“A Prudential Christian View of Addiction”

The disease model of addiction is real, this article says, but incomplete. Addiction affects the whole person, and it offers a vivid picture of the sin we all share: desire bent the wrong way, enslavement, and idolatry. That is why there should be no stigma when someone says, “I need help.” The article distinguishes wise avoidance from fear. A person in recovery who stays out of bars is exercising wisdom, but a life organized around fear of a substance can become its own kind of bondage. It also notes that change may need to happen gradually, since quitting alcohol or benzodiazepines abruptly can be dangerous, and that recovery happens best in community.

“Relief Is Not Redemption”

Written by a pastor and a social worker, this article expands on the final lecture. It argues that the real question about mental-health medication is how to practice discernment, and it notes that psychiatric drugs vary widely. Some, like mood stabilizers for serious conditions, can be a mercy; others are handed out far too easily. Faith, the authors write, is allegiance to Christ, so the question isn’t whether you have “enough faith” to skip medication. It’s whether a choice is helping you move toward Christ. The article closes with James 5, where healing happens in the church, and it is careful to say it offers pastoral counsel, not medical advice.

Questions and answers

These answers come from the lectures, the live panels, the follow-up podcasts, and the companion articles. Where an answer reflects Pastor Nic’s personal opinion rather than a church decision, that is noted.

Scripture and history

Doesn't the Bible condemn alcohol? It condemns drunkenness, consistently and especially as a habit. Wine itself is treated as a blessing. Drunkenness has been around as long as fermented drink, and Scripture still never bans alcohol because some people misuse it.

Wasn't the "wine" in the Bible really grape juice? That idea came out of early twentieth-century fundamentalism, and the series found nothing to support it. "New wine" was the current year's vintage, sweeter and lower in alcohol but still wine, and the Bible plainly says wine can make people drunk.

Didn't people only drink wine because the water was unsafe? Mostly not. Monte's history article calls this a myth: ancient people mixed their wine *with* water, and most had access to clean springs, rivers, and wells. Unsafe water became a widespread problem mainly with industrialization and crowded cities. Pastor Nic also noted in Part II that the water argument was overstated during Prohibition.

Has the church ever dropped wine before? Only on the fringes. An early group called the Encratites replaced wine with water in Communion because they believed the physical world was evil, and the church judged them heretical. When some fourth-century Christians in Antioch wished wine didn't exist, John Chrysostom told them not to blame God's gift for people's abuse of it.

Did Jesus use wine at the Last Supper? Yes. Wine ties the Lord's Supper to Passover, to the drink offerings of the Old Testament, and to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Pastor Nic pointed out that Jesus's first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding, and at the Last Supper he said he wouldn't drink it again until that final feast.

Why do many American churches, including ours, use grape juice? It goes back to the 1700s and 1800s, when mass distillation made spirits like gin cheaper than bread or milk and American drinking soared. The temperance movement, led largely by Christian women, cut consumption roughly in half. Wine and beer got swept up with hard liquor, though, and many churches went alcohol-free; pasteurized grape juice, popularized by Welch, made that easy. Pastor Nic thinks removing wine from Communion went too far, but he gives the temperance movement real credit for what it accomplished.

Is grape juice in Communion common around the world? Not historically. The church used wine for about 1,900 years. The juice tradition grew out of the American temperance movement and has since spread, as missionaries carried it to places like Eastern Europe, Africa, and India, where many Christians still consider any alcohol sinful. One member who came to faith in Germany said juice in Communion would have seemed strange there.

The proposal

What exactly is being proposed? Offering wine in Communion *alongside* grape juice, with each person choosing according to conscience. Nobody will be required to take wine.

Why not just keep grape juice? Pastor Nic believes the two aren't interchangeable, because wine carries a web of biblical meaning that juice can only point toward. He also observed that people on both sides feel strongly precisely because neither side really thinks they're the same thing.

Why is this coming up now? It's part of a larger effort to restore the Lord's Supper to a central place in worship alongside preaching, as it was for most of church history. Even early London Baptists regarded it as a sacrament in which the Lord is truly present. The church has already switched to a more substantial bread and has talked about taking Communion more often. Pastor Nic also sees a need for deeper roots at a time when many young evangelicals are drawn to Catholic and Orthodox churches. In his words, he simply wants to do what Jesus said.

Is the church endorsing drinking? No. Abstaining is completely acceptable; Timothy drank only water (1 Timothy 5:23). Sobriety remains central to the Christian life, and church leaders have practiced church discipline for drunkenness and will continue to.

Would this affect weddings or other church events? The planned vote is about Communion. In Part II, Pastor Nic did share his personal view that a ban on wine at weddings is too strict and that alcohol-free congregational feasts make sense because so many children attend. That was his opinion, and it isn't part of the proposal.

Conscience and care

If I take juice, am I a second-class Christian? No, and Pastor Nic has been emphatic about this. Taking juice for a reason of conscience, such as recovery, ministry to people who struggle with addiction, or a sincere conviction, is an act of worship that God fully blesses. He said that if he didn't think juice was a legitimate choice, he wouldn't be advocating for it, and that "the main question is, will you come to Communion?" His personal view is that juice should be chosen for reasons of conscience rather than simple taste preference or an unwillingness to consider the question.

What about people in recovery from alcoholism? No one in recovery will be asked to drink wine, and juice will always be available. Part of solid recovery is learning to be around alcohol without taking it. Anyone who would like accountability at the Communion station

can ask; Oaks advocates are glad to help. The Substack article on stumbling also recommends planning how each cup is served, so that choosing juice is easy and draws no attention.

Couldn't offering wine cause someone to stumble? In Scripture, stumbling means falling away from the faith, and we should never pressure anyone to act against their conscience. But the "weaker brother" principle has limits. If the most anxious voice always decides, gospel freedom gets lost. Offering both cups respects both concerns. The Substack article adds that the Lord's Supper is centered on Christ, and that when some Corinthians got drunk at the table, Paul corrected the misuse and kept the elements (1 Corinthians 11:20–34).

What if I disagree? Say so. Pastor Nic has repeatedly invited honest debate, and he has said that if the vote goes the other way, "we just go on with our lives" and keep serving the Lord together. On a disputable matter like this, Christians who reach different conclusions shouldn't judge one another.

The process

When will we vote? At the March congregational meeting. In November, the elders will ask what would help people prepare, whether town halls, coffee with elders, or something else, and those conversations will take place before March.

Where can I learn more? The full lectures and follow-ups are on the Engage & Equip podcast at highpointchurch.org/podcast. The Substance Substack has an Intoxicating Substances section with the seven articles summarized above and the paper on wine in Communion. An edited version of the full series paper is planned for the church website.

Questions still open

The series didn't settle a few practical questions, which may be worth raising in November:

- How will the wine and juice cups be distinguished and served?
- What is the guidance for children taking Communion?
- Will the church consider the ancient practice of adding a little water to the wine? Part II explained the tradition but didn't answer the question.

Scripture passages and terms

Passages referenced in the series

Passage	What it contributes
Psalm 104:14–15	Wine is God's gift that "gladdens human hearts"
Deuteronomy 14:26	Festival tithes could be spent on wine or other fermented drink
John 2:1–11	Jesus's first miracle: water into wine at a wedding
Matthew 26:26–29	The Last Supper and "the fruit of the vine"
1 Timothy 6:17	God provides everything for our enjoyment
1 Thessalonians 5:5–9	Christians are people of sobriety and self-control
Ephesians 5:18	Do not get drunk on wine; be filled with the Spirit
1 Corinthians 6:12–20	Is it beneficial? Will it master me? The body as a temple
1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14	Conscience, the "weaker brother," and not judging one another
Romans 14:23	Everything that does not come from faith is sin
1 Corinthians 9:19–27	Becoming all things to all people, with rigorous self-discipline
Galatians 2:11–14	Paul confronts Peter when pressure undermines the gospel
1 Timothy 5:23	Timothy drank only water; Paul advises a little wine for his health
1 Peter 1:7	Another person's faith is worth more than gold
James 1:2–4; Romans 5:3–5	Suffering produces perseverance and character

Key terms

Term	Meaning in this series
Hermeneutics	The process of interpreting Scripture and applying it today
Wholesome commodity	A good gift from God meant to be enjoyed rightly, as Scripture treats wine
Sobriety	Clear-minded self-control; in the New Testament, closely tied to the word for self-control
Christian liberty	Freedom in matters Scripture does not forbid, governed by wisdom and love
Weaker brother	Paul's term for a believer whose conscience is more restrictive than Scripture requires
Stumbling	Being led to fall away from the faith, not simply being offended
Element	The physical substance used in a sacrament, such as bread and wine
New wine	The current year's vintage: sweeter and lower in alcohol, but still wine
Temperance movement	The 19th- and early 20th-century movement against alcohol abuse that led many churches to adopt grape juice
Drug-centered model	Viewing psychiatric drugs as creating an altered state rather than correcting a specific chemical imbalance

Sources

- Engage & Equip podcast, "Intoxicating Substances" lecture series and follow-ups, High Point Church, March–September 2026, highpointchurch.org/podcast.
- *Substance*, Intoxicating Substances section, engageandequip.substack.com/s/intoxicating-substances:
  - "Sobriety and the Christian Life"

- “Relief Is Not Redemption”
- “Intoxication and Pursuing Godliness”
- “A Prudential Christian View of Addiction”
- “The Disease Model, Addiction, and Church Life: What About Causing Our Brother to Stumble?”
- “Beyond ‘Does It Cause Harm?’: A Philosophy of Intoxicating Substances”
- Monte Knetter, “Alcohol: The Consensus from Church History”