



Standards for Leaders – Alcohol

This document clarifies our beliefs, expectations and standards regarding alcohol consumption for all Hope Family leaders.

OUR CALL AS LEADERS

At Hope Family, our heart is to raise up leaders who honour Christ in private and public life, live with wisdom and protect both their own walk and the faith of others.

Our understanding is that Scripture does not explicitly forbid the consumption of alcohol in all circumstances. Our approach is not legalistic, or about control, but intentional, pastoral and wisdom-based. Leaders are held to a higher standard than the congregation. As leaders, our lives should point people clearly to Jesus and never distract from Him. Leaders must model integrity, self-control and wisdom. We always want to be able to say to others:

“Imitate our Hope Family leaders as they imitate Christ.”

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”
(1 Corinthians 11:1)

OUR STANDARDS

We ask all Hope Family leaders to commit to embracing these standards with humility, maturity and a shared desire to build God’s Church wisely and faithfully.

- Getting drunk is completely unacceptable for a spiritual leader.

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”
(Ephesians 5:18)

- If alcohol is consumed, moderation and wisdom are imperative and there must be no excess.

- Leaders are expected to exercise extreme wisdom in all social contexts where alcohol may be present. There is no alcohol allowed at church-related events and Small Group leaders should never offer alcohol to members of their Small Groups.
- When hosting Small Groups at home, please put alcohol away and not on display, to avoid unnecessary questions or stumbling blocks. People may make assumptions that can hinder their growth in Christ. Our aim is to maintain safe, welcoming, and spiritually healthy environments that reflect the atmosphere and culture people experience at church on Sundays.
- We ask our leaders not to post images or content with alcohol on social media. Even permissible consumption can create misunderstanding or offence, especially for new believers or those recovering from addiction.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MODERATION & EXCESS?

To help clarify practically, for leaders who choose to consume alcohol, excess begins at:

- More than one standard drink per occasion.
(small glass of wine, single beer, single measure of spirits)
- Consuming alcohol daily, routinely or habitually. Our reliance should be on Christ and never on alcohol. This is unwise for anyone, and especially for leaders.
- Alcohol should never be used as a way to cope, de-stress, or relax (drinking daily or drinking for stress relief). We look to Jesus alone as our source of peace, never alcohol.
- Excess begins before physical drunkenness and is broader than visible drunkenness. It includes loss of wisdom, loss of clear judgment, being “under the influence,” and allowing anything other than the Holy Spirit to master you.
- Excess is also about the example we set for others.

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

(Proverbs 20:1)

Please note: Alcohol by volume (ABV) differs from drink to drink, if the serving size looks similar. **On average:**

- Beer: 5%
- Cider: 6%
- Glass of Wine: 12% (why we ask that it is a small glass of wine)
- Brandy & Coke (8 to 10%)
- Etc.

SIGNS OF CONCERN

The following would be considered signs of concern for leaders:

- Alcohol becoming part of a leader's routine (regular, daily, habitual or for stress relief)
- Even slight changes in behaviour, tone, or judgment
- Any impairment, however mild
- Dulled spiritual sensitivity
- Being noticeable to others
- A leader feeling defensive when asked about alcohol
- Requiring justification ("I can handle it")
- Alcohol appearing around church-related events, Small Group socials, or ministry contexts. We do understand that for Small Groups meeting in restaurants, alcohol may be on display or served to others who are not part of the Small Group.

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- Full compliance with all alcohol laws.
- No alcohol under the age of 18.
- Please do not drink and drive. In South Africa, if a breathalyser or blood test shows 0.05% or higher, it is considered drunk driving.

OUR IDEAL FOR OUR LEADERS

Our ideal for Hope Family leaders is complete abstinence from alcohol. As leaders, we want to remove obstacles, live above reproach and set a Christ-centred example.

We have many people coming to church who are actively overcoming alcohol addiction or are in the early stages of healing and restoration. Because of this, we are careful not to create unnecessary stumbling blocks.

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak."

(1 Corinthians 8:9)

Although some things may be permissible, it may not be beneficial, helpful and constructive.

(See 1 Corinthians 10:23)

We ask that you carefully consider and pray about this, as many on our leadership team have already chosen to abstain from alcohol consumption, often for the sake of others.

A WISE QUESTION TO ASK

Instead of asking, "How much is allowed?", ask:

"Would anyone's faith, trust or respect be strengthened by this?"

If the answer is no, or unclear, choose restraint.