How to bring up drinking with someone you love

You noticed something, and you care. That's where this starts. You don't need the perfect words. You need a quiet moment, a humble heart, and the courage to say what you've seen.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

GALATIANS 6:1 (KJV)

Before you talk

- Pray first: for them, and for your own heart
- Pick a private moment when they're sober and not rushed
- Check your motives. You're there to love them, not to win
- Write down two or three things you've actually seen

What to say

- Start with care: "I love you, and I've been worried."
- Be specific: "Last Sunday you missed church after a late night."
- Speak for yourself: "I'm scared for you," not "You're a drunk."
- Ask, then listen: "How are you really doing?"
- Offer one next step, not a whole plan

What to avoid

- Labels and name-calling
- Talking while they've been drinking
- Lecturing, or a pile of Bible verses
- Threats made in anger
- Doing it in front of the group

If they say no

- Leave the door open: "I'm here when you're ready."
- Keep loving them, and keep praying
- Set healthy boundaries, without covering for them
- Get support for yourself: your pastor, or a group for families

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

EPHESIANS 4:15 (KJV)

One next step to offer

- Coffee with you, or with the pastor, this week
- A meeting together: a recovery meeting or your church's recovery ministry
- Talking to their doctor (see the safety note below)
- The Steps & Scripture app, if they'd rather start in private. Jimmy or Sarah will walk the steps with them, and keep pointing them back to people like you.

Safety first

Withdrawal can be dangerous. If someone drinks heavily every day, stopping suddenly can cause shaking, confusion, hallucinations or seizures. Help them talk to a doctor before they quit. If they're confused, seeing things, or have a seizure, call 911.

If they talk about suicide or harming themselves, take it seriously. Stay with them and call or text 988, or call 911 if they're in danger now.

Prayer for the conversation

Lord, give me Your love for my friend. Help me speak the truth gently, listen more than I talk, and leave the outcome to You. Meet them where they are, and don't let them walk alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4–7 (KJV)

More for churches: stepsandscripture.com/churches
The app: search "Steps & Scripture" on the App Store or Google Play.

In crisis? Call or text **988**. Free, confidential help 24/7: SAMHSA National Helpline **1-800-662-4357**. In danger? Call **911**.

Steps & Scripture is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. or any recovery organization. It is a peer-support tool, not medical care or therapy.