**Series Road Map**

**Series Overview:** Sex. Partying. Drugs. We all know these three topics in some fashion. Some of us have never touched these three things. Others have a loved one who has had struggled with one or more of these things and harmed us in some way because of it. Still, some of us have a deep-rooted struggle with one or more of sex, partying, and drugs. Even if we don’t, we all will be confronted by these three things at some point in our lives, and we will have decisions to make. Do we partake? What is and is not okay? What does scripture say about these things, and what’s God’s will for us? This series is designed to take us through three incredibly relevant topics that all of our students will have a decision to make about and teach what the Bible says about them and why, when abused or used wrongly, they are not helpful in our walks with Christ.

**Week Overview:**

This week, we take a dive into what scripture says about drugs. We know that some medicine can be helpful. Dayquil is great for allergies, for example. Yet we also are taught not only in church, but in school and by our parents that drugs are incredibly dangerous, and they’re all correct. So why are we taking a stance societally that drugs aren’t all that bad? At the heart of it is this: we think they’re fun, and so we abuse them and take them despite, knowingly or unknowingly, being crushed and enslaved by them. God doesn’t want that for us, and it breaks his heart when we choose drugs over him. He designed us for so much more. We’ll be talking about why what’s not helpful is turning to drugs.

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Share a story about a bad habit you have and how its not good for you. Yet, you resort to it despite knowing its not good for you. And when you try to quit, every part of you wants to go back to that habit because it’s a habit.

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** Drugs continue to drag the world into depression, anxiety, self-harm, and even death. And yet, we still societally don’t always see the danger ahead. We think it won’t be that bad or just one time won’t hurt, but the urge to continue using drugs is strong, and when we give in, we tailspin. God wants better for us and has a better plan for us, and it is much more enjoyable, fruitful, and wonderful than any drug could ever make us feel.

**Text:** 1 Peter 5:8-9

**Truth:**

For thousands of years, followers of Jesus have read scripture. Jesus on many different occasions recited scripture, illustrating its importance. Often, we make and have made the mistake of asking scripture, “How can I use you to communicate what I want you to say” instead of, “God, what are you trying to teach me through your word today?”. See the difference?

As followers of Jesus, we must connect with God through scripture. Engaging scripture strengthens our relationship with God, it is the revelation of God, and is the primary means by which we know God. The practices of Jesus come to life by engaging in scripture, who himself valued scripture.

**THP**: Drugs are not helpful to our walk with Christ.

**Supporting Points:**

* CDC statistics on drug abuse
* CDC info on what happens in our brain when we take drugs
* 1 Peter 5:8-9

**Application (call to action)**:

* Resist him
* Stand firm in the faith
* You’re not alone
  + Ways to get help

Practice: Scripture Engagement

Begin a “Read the Bible in a Year” Plan

As a life group, do the “Your Journey” devotionals

Start a Bible Study with some friends

Come and get a Bible!

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

(Share a story about a bad habit you have and how its not good for you. Yet, you resort to it despite knowing its not good for you. And when you try to quit, every part of you wants to go back to that habit because it’s a habit.)

What’s up Northview Students, we are in week 2 of “That’s Not Helpful”, where we are looking at three incredibly relevant topics to your lives and what scripture says about that. Last we talked about sex, and I can promise you this: tonight, we aren’t talking about sex. But, I’m looking forward to what God has placed on my heart for tonight’s message. But first, I have a confession to make: I love stress eating. When I have an assignment due and I’m trying to crank it out the night before and am overwhelmed, I find comfort in a bowl of Blue Bell’s chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream with some chocolate syrup on top. If I’m out of ice cream, I turn to a bowl of Cheerios or Oatmeal Crisp to soften the weight on my shoulders. But every time that I turn to that ice cream or that bowl of cereal, the next morning I wake up and I feel a little bit slower than usual. My body pays a small fine for taking in unhealthy food late at night, one of the worst times of day to eat. I know this habit isn’t good for me. It’s not rocket science. And yet, it’s so hard to quit that habit. There’s a saying in my family about this, “Tomorrow’s Day 1”. The joke is that tomorrow is day 1 of trying to eat better, trying to shed a few pounds, trying to take better care of myself. But we all know in my family that tomorrow isn’t really day 1 despite knowing it would be helpful to our health if it were.

Habits are hard to break. If they were easy, we all would have no issue breaking out of addictions and struggles. It's not always that simple though. Think about how your mind changes when getting addicted to something. Seriously, how do people get from trying something for the first time to it being part of their everyday rhythm, sometimes multiple times a day? How is it that people from all walks of life find themselves in the same bottomless pit of addiction and sometimes don’t even realize they’re addicted to something? Surely nobody wakes up one day and says, “Today I want to get addicted to something”. Nobody does! So how do so many people end up there? In short, the scientific answer would be dopamine and your brain. Maybe you’ve heard of this before, but dopamine is a molecule that sends messages to the reward center of your brain communicating that something is pleasurable. Your brain responds by gaining a desire for more dopamine and more desire for the thing you’re addicted to. That’s the incredibly short, succinct answer, and we’ll unpack it more later, but maybe you’re getting an idea of how people end up with addictions and why recovering from an addiction often takes months and maybe even years with professional help.

When I say the word “addiction” I have a feeling a significant amount of us in the room associate that word with “drugs”, and rightfully so. Especially when it comes to drugs, it can be a lengthy journey to overcome addiction. We are taught in church, in our schools, by our parents and family to stay away from drugs. Despite these efforts, according to the CDC 1 in 14 Americans report experiencing a substance use disorder. That’s not just hardcore drugs that you might be thinking of, that’s also from medication prescribed by doctors that people are abusing. Friends, hear me on this: we are in no way condemning medicine. It has its place in the world and is useful to us. What we are getting at is that **drugs have the ability to take control of our lives, and that simply is not helpful to our walk with Christ.**

Just by that CDC statistic, I can make an educated guess that some of us in the room have a loved one or a friend who possibly has a past with drug addiction or currently is addicted to drugs. It can be easy for us to think “How did they get there? I’d never be that foolish”. Really? You’d never be that foolish? Let me ask you this: What are you willing to do to fit in? What are you not willing to do to fit in? Where do you draw the line between what you believe is right and wrong in conjunction with what others will think of you?

That line, between what we believe is right and wrong in conjunction with what others will think of us, can get so blurry sometimes. It’s only one time. Everyone is doing it. If you don’t do it, you’ll lose your friends. If you don’t do it, you’ll be made fun of. It’ll make you feel good. Those lies make that line so blurry when we don’t know what we stand for. What are you willing to do to fit in? What are you not willing to do to fit in?

Let me ask you another question: have you ever thought that you needed to escape? Seriously, you’re so busy! There’s so many demands put on your shoulders for you to carry. The standards for you to achieve are astronomically high. And you’ve never thought about escaping it all? Just getting a break for a little bit before going back into the grind of your life? How often do we think “I just need to get to this day, and then I can rest”. And once that day comes, you’re saying “I just need to get to this day, and then I can relax”. But all you end up doing is running like a hamster on a wheel running round and round going nowhere. But you just keep running. In fact, you run harder.

This is how many people get a drug addiction: they keep running on that wheel, harder and harder and harder, and try to find a quick escape that makes them feel good for a short moment. There is no option for them to stop running so fast. To take a break. To nourish themselves. Thus, a quick fix seems like a decent solution. But that quick fix does not become the solution: it becomes their god. Over the course of weeks and months and years, they become so dependent on that quick fix that they cannot fathom living without it. It’s controlling, manipulating, and frankly, it’s evil.

God wants so much better for creation than this. The idol of drugs can control your entire life, but God never designed for us to live like that. In fact, He warns us against this idol. While the Bible does not directly say the word “addict” or “addiction”, 1 Peter does touch on the dangers having a cluttered mind.

1 Peter was written by Peter who was both a flawed and emotional leader. He was a leader among the disciples who oversaw the early church formation as entrusted to him by Jesus. Can you imagine having the Savior of the World trust you to be one of the most important leaders in starting the church? That hamster wheel we talked about, running and running and running, Peter must have felt that at times. That’s what is so amazing about this passage: Peter knows that he cannot have a cluttered mind and still live a life with Christ as Lord.

We’ll pick up 1 Peter in Chapter 5, verse 8:

**8**Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **9**Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

Be alert and of sober mind. Friends, Peter is sending a warning out that we should be on high alert of. The enemy is here to ruin you. Think about that. He wants to RUIN you. The way he wants to do that is to put anything he can on the throne of your life that isn’t God. Whatever distracts you, he will put in front of you.

When we abuse drugs, we have chemicals swirl around our brain that are guaranteed to make us unalert and not of a sober mind. This is what the enemy wants. He wants us to not be at our best because he is waiting to devour you. He tempts us because we often fail to realize that there are many things in this world that can easily overtake our relationship with Christ. Why? Because we did not take them seriously enough to begin with.

Temptation looks fun a lot of times. It might even feel like it's fun in the moment that we give in to it. But we fail to realize that something that seems so insignificant will likely grow quickly into something that dominates our lives. We think that one time won’t hurt anyone. It’s all just fun, what’s the harm? How naïve can we be! Here’s what the CDC says on its website about what is going on chemically when you take drugs:

“When people take drugs, the brain is flooded with chemicals that take over the brain’s reward system and cause them to repeat behaviors that feel good but aren’t healthy. The brain adapts to continued drug use by developing a tolerance, which means it takes more of a drug to feel the same result. Not only does this lessen the brain’s ability to resist temptation, but it can also affect the amount of pleasure a person receives from normal, healthy activities like enjoying food or the company of others”.

The kind of drugs we are talking about are chemically designed to kill you. Seriously. That’s not only coming from the CDC, but Peter also knew that over 2,000 years ago!

So, what do we do? We see the danger of drugs, but what now? Let’s read verse 9 one more time:

**9**Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

Peter calls out three things we can do to guard ourselves against the dangers of drugs, and they all build on each other:

* 1. Resist him.

Resist the enemy. Resist the temptation and opportunity to partake in abusing drugs. What kind of social environments are you currently putting yourself in? Are you putting yourself in spaces where you are frequently presented with the opportunity to do drugs? Friends, if that’s the case, I want to strongly encourage you to rethink who your friends are. Seriously. Friends don’t want friends to do drugs. Friends are supposed to love you, encourage you, support you, be there for you, and want what’s best for you. They are doing none of those things by presenting you with the opportunity to abuse drugs. Resist the enemy.

* 1. Stand firm in the faith.

It’s not enough just to resist. That’s a good place to start, but we can’t rely on our own will power and our own desire to not do drugs forever. Peer pressure is real, and odds are if you are not convicted about this, you’ll give in. That’s why we must have clarity from scripture. Our faith in Jesus requires us to stand firm in His teachings regardless of what is happening around us. Maybe you have never been presented the opportunity to do drugs, couldn’t tell the difference between drugs, and have no idea what drugs really do. Great. Maybe you could get drugs within the next 20 minutes if you really wanted to because that’s the circles you’re in right now. Please hear me on this: following Jesus comes with sacrifice. You might have to sacrifice some friendships that aren’t really friendships. God cares about you and loves you more than any human can. The people around you who are not doing you any favors in resisting drugs are not your real friends. Stand firm in faith. This leads to the third step…

* 1. You’re not alone.

You’re not alone. I can almost guarantee that you’ll feel alone the first time you stand firm in your faith in God and get pushback from your peers. Why? Because you’re standing directly against them by not partaking in what they’re doing. By resisting temptation and standing firm in your faith, you are looking them in the eye and saying, “This is wrong, I’m not doing it, and you are probably aware that what you’re doing is wrong too”. It will likely be tense, feel confrontational, and may even garner a strong reaction. But you’re not alone. The Holy Spirit is with you, the body of believers are with you, the church is with you, your life group is with you, your leaders are with you, my friend. You are not alone. You’ll face opposition. You’ll face persecution. But you’re not alone.

1 Peter 5: 9, “Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Resist him. Stand firm in the faith. You’re not alone. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Some of you tonight might be feeling that way right now. Drugs might be in control of your life, sucking the joy out of you. **We’re going to put a slide up that has a variety of places you can go to get professional help**. One of the beauties of the church is that we are called to be connected in our community and serve the kingdom of God. On this slide we have different church partners that are options to receive help. I am willing to connect you, or if you would like to go on your own, please do so. Please listen to me on this friend: now is the time to get help and turn your life around. Not after high school, not after college, now is the time. God is powerful enough to turn this around, and He also has equipped our church partners with the expertise to help you in a way that, I humbly admit, I am not able to do as well as them. As your student pastor, I am for you, I love you, and I am here for you, and our volunteers too are for you, love you, and are here for you.

We’re going to close in prayer tonight, but before we do so, I want all of us to take a picture of this slide, because I think we all could use it either today or someday, for ourselves, a friend, a family member, whomever it may be. If you need to talk to someone, there is no shame or guilt to be had for reaching out to get help. Let’s talk right now after this service, or let’s get something on the calendar. God designed us for so much more in this life than to be hooked in sin. Do not let pride get in the way of that. Let’s pray.