**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:** Although we all define it a little differently, everyone wants to “have a good time”. For some, that’s getting friends together and watching a game, grabbing dinner with another couple, or even going paintballing with your life group. For others, they demand access to endless amounts of alcohol, the opposite gender, and possibly drugs. They’re looking for a party each day of the week because everything else is such a drag in comparison to a party. What goes unacknowledged is that we often make our worst decisions at parties. There’s a way to have a good time that is clean, pure, and God-honoring, and there’s a way to “have a good time” that is the opposite of those things. This week, we look into why partying, in the sense of unhealthy teenage parties, is not helpful to our walks with Christ.

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Tell of an amazing time you had with your friends/spouse that you would consider a party, but was clean, pure, and God-honoring.

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** You’ll miss out. Everyone will be there. What’s the harm to have a little fun? These are some of the lies we tell ourselves about partying. What’s really going on in our hearts? We want to make a move on that girl/guy we are attracted to. We want to drink. We want to be cool, popular, accepted, and fun. All of those things, for teenagers especially, are not helpful to our walks with Christ. God has a better way for us than this.

**Text:** Ephesians 5:15-21

**Truth:** God designed us to do life together. This helps explain why we value life groups so much in Northview Students. But the enemy likes to twist truth; instead of doing life together in healthy ways, he encourages and promotes sinful ways that, if we aren’t careful, may be more attractive on the surface but absolutely kill our relationship with Christ and those around us. Partying can be a good thing if done in a God-honoring way, but most of the time, it yanks us further and further from not only God, but our families, our true friends, and our own identity.

**THP**: Don’t just hangout with Jesus, BE with Jesus ALWAYS!

**Supporting Points:**

* God designed us to do life together, but the enemy wants to twist that to being destructive
* Light switch theme

**Application (call to action)**:

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***

(If you don’t already, have a cross on stage to the side with pins below it)

(Have a light switch on your podium)

(Tell a story of a time you were doing something you shouldn’t have in the dark and were terrified of the lights being turned on)

I was abroad in the beautiful land of England when something dawned on me: I could be whoever I wanted to be. Just for this three-week study abroad trip, I could do whatever I wanted. Really, I’m in a foreign country where nobody knows me. Even the college students I came with don’t know me all that well. If I really wanted to, I could be something else, if only for a short three weeks.

One day, we went to a pub that the Beatles used to play in called “The Cavern”. It’s about 7 floors of stairs underground and is famous in Liverpool. The live music was incredible, the lights were off, and the drinks were flowing. After a few drinks, I started talking to a few British people with a few of my college friends and they asked me, “What do you do?” and “What are you interested in?”.

Those questions hit me like a brick wall. It reminded me that as I stood there in that underground pub, I couldn’t hide. I could’ve lied and said I wasn’t studying ministry. I could’ve lied about anything I wanted to. But deep down, if I was willing to lie, I knew that was not who I was. I was terrified of the lights in that pub being flipped on. The shame and guilt of being caught would’ve felt so heavy. I knew what I was doing was wrong. The darkness felt safe, I felt hidden, disguised almost. The light was terrifying though.

Friends, God designed us to do life together and enjoy being in community with one another with guardrails that were never meant to seem unattractive to us. Unfortunately, those guardrails have been twisted in such a way that makes our lens see what God created beautiful seem dull on the outside. **I believe that we have bought into the lie that because we can’t see others in a dimly lit party, we think God can’t see us.**

The biggest buzzkill at any party where things are happening that should not be happening is when the father of the house enters the party and flips the lights on. Have you ever realized that? When the lights get flipped on, everyone stops doing what they *shouldn’t* be doing. You stop making out with the girl you have no intent of having any kind of Godly relationship with beyond the intimate moment you’re abusing with her. You hide the drinks you shouldn’t have stolen from somewhere or convinced someone older to buy you because you know it was a bad decision and without the light being flipped on, only more bad decisions were going to be made. You stuff the drugs you got from a “friend” quick and hope that nobody else can smell them on you because you might be spending time in a juvenile detention center otherwise. Why do people react in that way? The lights got flipped on. They are caught. The darkness made you think that nobody could see what you were doing and your relationship with God, your parents, friends, siblings, reputation….none of that was at risk. The darkness made you think this, and what it did was reveal what your heart truly desires.

Parties often reveal what we really want yet leave us so unfulfilled (Flip your light switch off). It’s like a drug. It lures us in but leaves us so unfulfilled, so unsatisfied, yet we think more is the solution. And so, you do it more, and more, and then some more, and all the while you’re convincing yourself that this is not impacting your life in a negative way or in any way at all. But it slowly, maybe even quickly, becomes your entire identity. The most heartbreaking thing about this, is that God created us for so much better. John 10:10 says,

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”.

God wants so much better for you than for you to be captive to what seems so enticing. That’s what this whole series has been about. Sex, drugs, partying, they’re not helpful to you and your relationship with Christ. They’re much like an unhelpful road sign. We see a sign that says, “Don’t Drive When Underwater” and think “That was pointless”. “That’s not helpful”. Yet in the thick of a storm approaching the bridge that that sign is on, we’re most likely going to floor it and drive through the underwater bridge to get home, right? We can sit here and say, “Yeah, sex, drugs, and partying are not helpful”. But in practice, it’s not so easy for us to stand by that statement.

In case you have forgotten or did not know, our God is a God that creates. In Genesis, the opening book of the Bible, the first chapter offers insight as to how God created *everything*. Genesis 1:2-5 tells us what our creative God did right after creating the heavens and the earth:

**2**Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

**3**And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **4**God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. **5**God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Watch this: The next thing our heavenly father did when He began creating was, metaphorically, **He created a light switch, and flipped the lights on.** (Flip your light switch on).

In the Lord, the lights get flipped on, but there’s nothing to hide. There’s nothing to be ashamed of. There’s nothing to hope that somebody doesn’t find out about you. In the Lord, we can begin to cultivate a group of friends that we are genuinely proud. In the Lord, the lights get flipped on and our heavenly Father looks at us and sees His child and is pleased. In the Lord, we live wisely, we make the most of every opportunity we have because it is a gift from God, and we give all the glory back to God because it has always been and always will be His to begin with. Friends, the emptiness you might be experiencing from living a life that seeks fulfillment through unhelpful things will only leave you unfulfilled. There’s an old saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. You don’t have to live a life of insanity.

This feeling, of seeing things around you that are enticing on the surface, but are not helpful, is not new. For thousands of years, people across the globe have been able to relate. In fact, this is exactly how the Christians from Ephesus felt when Paul wrote to them. The city of Ephesus in Asia was not only the third largest in the empire, but it was also incredibly wealthy. It was known as a mecca for dark arts and magic, promoted a false god of fertility that allowed silversmiths to thrive on making idols of it, and even boasted one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. When Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, which is the book of Ephesians in the Bible, was delivered, the silversmiths rioted against Paul’s preaching because it was a threat to their business of making shrines of a false god. That’s the kind of environment these early Christians found themselves in when receiving Paul’s letter to them. He offers encouragement to them in chapter 5,

**8**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light **9**(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) **10**and find out what pleases the Lord. **11**Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. **12**It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. **13**But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. **14**This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
    rise from the dead,
    and Christ will shine on you.”

**15**Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16**making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17**Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. **18**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19**speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, **20**always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ, we are called to live as children of light, consisting of goodness, righteousness, and truth. These three fruits of the light: goodness, righteousness, and truth, not only stand in opposition to, but they shine light on darkness. Paul describes in verse 14 the person far from Christ as dead and asleep. He goes on to say they’re unwise. They’re wasting opportunities, being foolish, don’t understand the Lord’s will for them. The word “debauchery” in verse 18 sums up how dead they are. Debauchery means excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures. Being in darkness keeps you in debauchery. It’s insanity: making the same choices again and again and again and expecting a different outcome. Dead. Asleep. Unwise. Wasting opportunities. Foolish. Out of tune with the Lord’s will.

So, what’s the alternative? You said God wants so much better for us, and in John 10:10 Jesus says that He came to bring life and life to the full. But what does that mean? Be filled with the Spirit. Paul says in verse 19 that the alternative is to be filled with the Spirit. If we are filled with the Spirit, shining light on darkness, producing fruits of goodness, righteousness, and truth, we will consequently speak to one another with encouragement, thankfulness, respect, and genuine praise towards Jesus. We do not have to live a life of insanity, dominated by trying to get to Friday and Saturday all week. In the Spirit, we can cease chasing fulfillment through hooking up at parties, drinking away our pain, and trying to escape our feelings with drugs.

“Can’t I just go and not do any of those things despite others doing them?”. In theory, maybe. But let me propose something to you: If you truly do not want to engage in the main things happening at an event, but still want to go to an event, what’s the point? Really though, think of it like this: Imagine wanting to go to a show on Broadway. But you do not want to pay the price of the tickets, you do not want to sit so close to other people you do not know, and your seat is too far from the stage to really see what’s going on. Oh, and you’re not a fan of that show, even though it is Broadway. You wouldn’t want to go anymore, right? You aren’t a fan of the show, would overpay for bad tickets, and sit with strangers you don’t want to sit with. In the same way, it is senseless to adopt the attitude of attending a party without engaging in the main activities because you don’t want to. What’s really happening there, you’re saying you don’t want any part of. So why go?

Friends, in the Spirit we can stop driving down a road paved by the enemy that is leading to our destruction. But we must be honest with ourselves: do we want that? Seriously, do you want that? Life in the Spirit produces goodness, righteousness, and truth. Do you want that? Life in the Spirit includes speaking to one another with encouragement, thankfulness, respect, and genuine praise towards Jesus, who is Lord. Do you want a community like that? Life in the Spirit means that when Jesus promised us that he came to bring life, and life to the full, we experience that because of the Spirit. Are you ready for that?

We talked earlier about light (make sure your light switch is handy). When the lights are on (flick light switch on if it isn’t flicked on), and we’re in the Spirit, we have nothing to hide. There is nothing to be ashamed of. But maybe tonight you find yourself in the dark (flick light switch off) and are terrified of the light. In your heart, there’s something you’re hiding that you are mortified of someone else finding out about. Maybe it’s related to week 1 when we talked about pursuing sexual integrity. It could be the way you were abused in your past, decisions you’ve made, the porn addiction you haven’t told anyone about. Maybe that thing that feels so heavy right now is related to week 2 when we talked about drugs and what we are and are not willing to do to fit in. It could be that tonight is hitting hard for you, and some decisions you’ve made at parties are weighing on you.

Paul in Ephesians is calling on us to shed light on the darkness in our lives. In verse 13 he says,

“But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.”

The darkness that you possibly realize is in you in this moment is brought into visibility by light. By shining light on what is dark, we begin to repent, to truly turn in the opposite direction from the path of destruction paved by the enemy and pursue Christ. This practice, of shining light on what is dark, can be exercised through the practice of confession. We confess our sins not because we’re proud of them, but because we need God’s forgiveness which is sufficient through what Jesus did on the cross. Confession allows us to step out of the darkness and into the light, a life in the Spirit. We cannot produce the fruits of life in the Spirit, goodness, righteousness, and truth, if we have darkness in us.

Tonight, we’re going to close in a moment of confession. 1 John 1:9 says, “

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.

I’m not going to do anything to embarrass you, intimidate you, or belittle you. Those feelings are not from the Lord. He calls us to conviction that leads to repentance, not embarrassment, shame, and feeling small. (Have volunteers begin passing out index cards and pens). We’re going to provide an index card for you and some pens, and our worship team is going to come up and lead a song for us. I want you to take this moment and simply pray. Ask God, “What is it I’m struggling with and might not be aware of?”. Maybe you’re very aware of what you’re struggling with that you know is not helpful for your relationship with Christ but is nonetheless a struggle. It could be partying, pornography, drugs, sex, identity issues, whatever it may be, our God is big enough to walk with you away from that struggle. Once you’ve written something on your index card, you’re going to pin it on this cross, symbolizing that tonight is the night you’re giving that struggle to God. On your way back to your seat, I would encourage you to grab one of our adult volunteers and simply ask for prayer for that thing you wrote down. They love you, they are cheering for you, and they are in your corner. There is nothing to be vulnerable with a trusted adult, and I promise they are all trustworthy. Let’s take the next few minutes and pray for this.

(Worship team leads, all that happens)