**Intro:**

I was 21 years old and I thought my life was over. The room was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. The sound that came next from my newlywed wife as she sobbed and ran out of the room is one of the most painful memories etched into my brain. I had just confessed to her that I was struggling with pornography. I know, I know, I’m a pastor, I’m not supposed to struggle with THAT sin or if I do, I DEFINITELY shouldn’t talk about it. But this is real. It was a sin that enveloped my life for almost 7 years and it was a sin that was so devastating, so harmful, and so destructive that it almost cost me my marriage before it ever really began.

There was this constant fear that hung over me. I walked around always looking over my shoulder, as if someone was somehow going to find out this dirty little secret that I was hiding. It felt easiest to look at at night. In the dark. When I was alone. The darkness created this sense of invisibility. That no one—including God—could see the shameful things I was looking at. And yet, in the back of my mind, I always found myself thinking: “what if someone turns the lights on?” What if someone finds me out? What if I get…caught?

**Tension:**

Maybe for you it’s not pornography or maybe it is, but you know what I’m talking about, right? That gut-sinking feeling, the rush of adrenaline that pulses through you when you feel like someone is sneaking around the corner. The moment when you’re—as the old adage goes—“caught with your hand in the cookie jar.”

You know what I mean?

Why is it that we have this desire, this bend, this need to hide? From the beginning of time, we’ve been convinced that secrecy is safe. That hiding is honorable. That concealing is cool. I mean, if you can be the church kid on Sundays, the athlete on Fridays, and the life of the party on Saturdays, THAT is the good life.

But is it?

Take inventory of your soul. Aren’t you exhausted? Aren’t you tired of keeping up this front? Of being one person in this room and another person entirely in this space? Aren’t you over having to win and accrue and convince others that you’re worthy of acceptance?

**Truth:**

My friends, we serve a God who sees you just as you are and LOVES you. But He knows that in order to experience full intimacy with Him, we have to come out of hiding and into the light.

This isn’t our natural desire though, is it? It’s why I think we love parties so much. Those cool, underground, basement parties where the lights are dim and the red solo cups are being pushed around…it tends to elevate our courage. It seems to heighten our confidence. Something about being in the dark, about not being FULLY seen makes us…comfortable.

But that’s a direct result of the fall. Check this out. Genesis 3, beginning in verse 8,

*Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day,* ***and they hid****from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.****9****But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”*

***10****He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”*

***11****And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*

After sinning, Adam and Eve’s natural response was to hide. To run towards the darkness rather than the light.

But, our God is a God of truth, mercy, and justice. He not only loves the light, he IS the light. Flip back to Genesis 1, starting in verse 2,

**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.

Our heavenly Father metaphorically **created a light switch, and flipped the lights on.**

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 times 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’s slowly, maybe even quickly, becoming 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”.

Inspiration:

My friends, this is NOT the life our God wants us to live. He’s not anti-parties. We see Jesus partying ALL. THE. TIME. In the Scriptures. So, don’t mishear me. It’s really not even about partying. It’s about engaging in acts that you’re only comfortable participating in in the dark.

You come to church on Sundays but get sloshed on Saturdays.

You engage in life group on Wednesdays but smoke weed on Fridays.

The difference? You’re hidden the weekend. You’re with people who don’t care. Your parents aren’t around, your youth pastor’s not around.

And in the darkness, you feel safe to hide. But, as soon as those lights get flipped on, your pulse races.

Is this really the best way to live? What if life and life to the full was available to us? IT IS! But it only comes through living in the light. From having nothing to prove, nothing to lose, and nothing to hide.

So, what are you holding onto that needs to come to the light?

I was only able to step out of my addiction when I finally admitted that I had a problem and I invited others in. I was only able to overcome my sin when I stopped hiding in the dark and began walking in the light.

That same invitation is available to you tonight.

Be brave. Be bold. Be vulnerable. This is the last week of life group for the SCHOOL YEAR. Leave it all on the table for your group and allow others in to the darkest parts of your heart.

This is a safe place and you are LOVED.

Let me pray for us before we begin this conversation…

*Prayer.*

*Amen.*