

# **Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll**

**Scripture: Galatians 5**

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Youth Service**

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Pastor: So tonight, I have the task of delivering this message for a youth service. The pressure is on. Unlike Wednesday night when there can be a lot of commotion going on, now you just have to sit and listen. So here's my chance to really get a message across. So what shall I deal with? One of the usual topics: "Sex, drugs and rock'n roll"?

Youth: Oh no. Not those typical topics. Why in the world do adults always want to harp on those subjects? Do you really think those are the biggest issues in our lives?

P: Well, maybe they're not the biggest issues, but they are areas of concern. The world comes with its message about "Sex, drugs, and rock'n roll" (or to use the older phrase: wine, women and song.) And we worry that you'll be lured away by the thinking of the world on these subjects, rather than follow what the Bible teaches.

Y: Come on, do you think it's all that bad?

P: Well, do you remember the discussion we had about wearing purple at school on October 20, to stand up against bullying for those who are gay? It wasn't part of the lesson, but someone raised that issue. And then someone asked the question: What do we (the church) think about the whole gay issue? And so I had to briefly explain the biblical position—that God created us male and female and that sexual relations was intended to be expressed within marriage.

Y: Well I suppose, we might need a reminder about God's intent for sexuality, but the church seems to come across so negative all the time on that issue.

P: You're probably right on that one. But I'm probably not the one to speak about the joy of sex within marriage. So maybe we'll drop the subject and see if the next one works.

Y: You mean "drugs?" Are you an expert on that one? Are you going to tell us some secret past that we never knew about? Were you a pothead? Is this where you're going to show us the picture of you wearing a leather jacket, with an earring, and a joint in your mouth? Now that would be interesting.

P: No, no, no. Let's not get rumors going. Such a picture, if it would ever surface, was taken at a Halloween party, at Redeemer College, where drugs were NOT present. Drugs, whether legal or illegal, have not been my temptation.

Y: What do you mean legal or illegal?

P: Well, there are legal drugs: cigarettes and alcohol; even caffeine—and if you include that one, some might think that I am addicted to coffee. But alcohol is very different than coffee, but you don't want me to repeat the lesson we had last year on alcohol, do you?

Y: No, I think I'd know where you end on that one: Alcohol is to be used in moderation and not abused. Right?

P: Right. See, maybe I am getting the message across.

Y: Well, don't let it go to your head; after all, that's a message our society pushes on us as well, at least in terms of drinking and driving. So, we've touched upon sex and drugs. But there is no way, you can teach us anything about rock'n roll.

P: Why is that?

Y: Because you listen to classical music. Who listens to classical music? I'm sure your car stereo didn't stay long at "Hot 89.9" after you brought us guys back home from slave day.

P: Well, actually it did stay there for a day or two. But honestly, it's not my style of music, whatsoever. It never was. I'll confess that I listened to classical music already in high school—when I was your age. That's what would have been on my ipod—if they existed in those days. I guess that made me a kind of oddball, already back then.

Y: It certainly did. It still makes you an oddball. No wonder you like the songs from the Psalter Hymnal. As for me, I like the new stuff. I like my Hot 89.9.

P: Like Eminem and “No Love.”

Y: Do you have to get back to that discussion?

P: Hey, when someone from youth group posted it on Facebook, I didn't get all parental on anyone did I? I actually listened to it several times, watching the video, printing out the words, and trying to figure out the message of the song. We even heard snippets of it at Youth Group, as it was on someone's ipod.

Y: No, you didn't get all parental on us, but you didn't like the song either.

P: You have to admit it has some pretty bad language in it. You wouldn't want me to read it, in case your mother in the congregation. At least, I wouldn't want to read it aloud if my mother was listening. The language is quite offensive. Not pulpit material.

Y: That's because as a pastor, you live a very sheltered life. You don't get to hear that kind of language too often. But trust me, it's the language all around us in our society—in school, on the streets, at work.

P: Oh, I don't doubt that. But don't think for a moment, I live a sheltered life as a pastor. In my ministry here, I have been sworn at with worse words than in that Eminem song, with worst images than that song suggests.

Y: Really?

P: Really.

Y: But you still don't like the song.

P: No, I don't. But it's not just because of the bad language and filthy images it uses. I have a problem with the overall message of the song and video that came with it. Its answer to bullying in school is violence. And answering violence with violence is not the Christian message. I think there is a better answer in Jesus. And so, I think there can be better music you can listen to. It doesn't have to be classical music—although classical music will outlast Eminem. Remember the rap star, Emmanuel Jal, whose story as a war soldier we watched, last year. That's rap music, too; but with a very different message than Eminem. I just want you to think about what you're listening to and why.

Y: Now, you're sounding like my mother again.

P: Well, it's not your mother I want to sound like. I want to sound like someone else?

Y: Who might that be?

P: Jesus.

(pause)

P: But I realize that in focusing on "Sex, Drugs and rock'n roll" I can be sending out a wrong message.

Y: And what wrong message might that be?

P: That the Christian faith is all about rules. The heart of Christianity isn't about a list of do's and don't—and most of the time, coming across as: Don't. Don't have sex before marriage. Don't get drunk. Don't do drugs. Don't listen to foul-laced, violent driven music, or video games. Don't do this. Don't do that. I guess, it can easily sound like Christianity doesn't want youth or anyone to have fun.

Y: That's right. It does sound pretty negative. It seems that the church is all about a bunch of rules. Didn't Jesus have some serious arguments with some of the religious leaders of his time, who really stressed the rules? Didn't they even have rules against healing on the Sabbath? And didn't Jesus really come down hard on them?

P: Yes, you're right. They were called the Pharisees. And they made their religion, rule driven. Jesus didn't want us to follow a set of rules. Jesus wants us to follow him. Jesus wants us to be in a relationship with him and with his heavenly Father. We're not to be loyal to a set of rules and regulations. We're to be loyal to a person. That's why we're called Christians—we follow the way of Jesus. We belong to him.

This is key point: We need to be followers of Jesus. A person can be celibate all his life, but if he doesn't follow Jesus, then that gift is worthless; a person can abstain from all alcohol, drugs, and even caffeine—so while he will probably live longer and healthier, if he doesn't follow Jesus, then the death he eventually faces will still be an eternal death. A person can listen to the best of classical music, and however heavenly it might sound, it won't get you into heaven. We need to follow Jesus.

Y: Okay. Calm down. You're getting a little "preachy" there. If I heard you correctly, you said: We don't follow a set of rules, we are to follow Jesus. Right?

P: Right.

Y: So does that mean we can throw out all the rules? Does that mean we can do whatever we want? Somehow, I don't think that's what you're after. Otherwise, you won't preach on the Ten Commandments or have youth lessons that touch upon "sex, drugs and rock'n roll? So where's the catch? There has to be a catch somewhere.

P: You're right. Following Jesus doesn't mean anything goes. He wants us to follow him. And following him means not living according to the sinful nature, but living according to the Spirit. The Scripture reading from Galatians 5 describes what that is like. Paul writes, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." Paul goes on to describe that this is a freedom from all the sinful ways of the world. It's a freedom in which we can serve and love our God. True freedom doesn't mean anything goes. It means living according to God's design for humanity.

Y: But doesn't that make Christianity just a bunch a "Don'ts"? Aren't we back to rule after rule? Aren't we back to all those negative commands?

P: No, let me explain:

First of all, we are following a person—not a rule book. We are following a person, who loved us so much that he was willing to die for us,

while we were still sinners. So when we stumble and fall, he won't reject us. If we are just following a rulebook, after a few violations, we'd probably be thrown off the team. That will be it. Then no one would make it, because we all break the rules to one degree or another.

Y: Even pastors?

P: Yes, even pastors. But because we follow a person who already paid for our sins, we know he won't give up on us, even when we stumble and fall. He just picks us and encourages us to follow him.

Y: That's something positive.

P: Yes. Now secondly, because we follow Jesus rather than a rule book, we know that Jesus has our best interest in mind. After all, following the way of Jesus, loving God and loving each other, according to God's will, is in our best interest. Life goes better when we follow the way of Jesus. Good things result when we do the will of God.

Y: Are you saying, we're better off following the way of Jesus rather than the ways of the world?

P: That's right, where has sexual freedom led society? Shall I list the diseases, like AIDS? What happens to be a person caught in a life addicted to drugs? It's not a pretty picture. Is the worldview of Eminem really a happy one? Not really.

Y: I suppose you might be right. It's just that the ways of the world seem so appealing. What we need then is to make following Jesus something really exciting. I don't often see that excitement and enthusiasm on the part of everyone who goes to church.

P: You're right. We need to show a little more excitement and enthusiasm about the faith, than we often do. But living the Christian faith can be challenge. That leads to my third point: In following Jesus rather than simply a rulebook, we are given the Holy Spirit to help us along. We're not left on our own. A rulebook can't help us follow the rules. But Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can follow Jesus. It's like our own personal trainer so that we can get spiritual fit. And the Spirit uses church, worship, youth group, personal devotions to help us follow Jesus.

Y: Hey, you've now mentioned three points. A good Reformed sermon has three points, right?

P: That's what they say.

Y: So that means you're done.

P: I guess, I am. There's only one word, left to say. And you can say it for me.

Y: Amen.

P: Let us pray...