

SEX, DRUGS AND SAUSAGE ROLLS

Discussion Notes

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

This week we looked at Ephesians 5:8-20. It's a rich passage that we didn't have time to fully unpack during the service, so you may want to spend a while reading this together and reflecting on it. What jumps out at you about it? What challenges you?

Hannah shared about her experiences with drug addiction.

- Do you know other stories like Hannah's?
- What stood out to you about what she shared?
- Hannah said that a big part of her finding freedom was engaging with the Bible and her parents faithfully praying for her. How can this story encourage us in how we approach drink and drugs, either for ourselves or people we know?

Mat told us so fairly shocking statistics about drug use in Bristol. The European Centre for Monitoring Drug Use called Bristol the 'cocaine capital of Europe', whilst the Tab reported anecdotal stats of 82% of UWE students trying MDMA.

- What is your response to these stats?
- How much influence do you see drink and drugs having on your friends' lives?

From Ephesians 5 we can see Paul encouraging us to be **wise**, **loving** and **filled with the Spirit** when it comes to our attitude towards drugs and alcohol.

One way that we can make **wise** decisions is to be better informed. He shared that MDMA deaths went up from 56 in 2017 to 92 in 2018, with this repackaged ecstasy being cut with lots of different substances. Mat explained how cocaine and alcohol mixing is very dangerous, with cocaine usage the leading cause of drug related deaths in the UK. Even cannabis is now stronger than it has ever been before.

- Does knowing this information about drugs effect our ability to make wise decisions about drug use?
- What does it look like to act with wisdom? Is it avoiding situations where drugs are involved, or something else?

Paul tells us clearly: 'don't get drunk on wine.' Mat made the point that we risk being hypocritical if we believe the Bible but don't follow this. Similarly, the Bible tells us that to follow the laws of then governments we live under. If drugs are illegal and yet we take them are we also being hypocritical here?

- Do you agree?
- What makes it difficult for us to follow Paul's instructions here?

Mat also encouraged us to be **loving** in how we think about drugs and alcohol. Something we might not think about much is the damage that drugs do to the poorest

and most vulnerable people in our world. There are 164,000 homicides related to cocaine each year whilst other drug trades carry similar risks to the poorest people.

- Mat said 'there is no such thing as fair-trade cocaine.' Does this change the way you or your friends might think about drugs?
- Have you considered this aspect of the drug industry before?

Mat also said that we must consider this for alcohol too. 1 in 10 hospital beds in the NHS are taken due to alcohol misuse and we know that a large number of cases of abuse and neglect are linked to drinking.

- How can we have a loving attitude towards alcohol?
- How can we encourage our friends to think about these negative aspects of the drinking and drugs without being judgmental?

Finally, Paul urges us to "instead be filled with the Spirit". Mat recalls Paul telling us to be 'children of the light' in dark places.

- How can we do this well? What does it look like to be children of light in this area?
- What does it look like to be 'filled with the Spirit'? What difference would it make to our appetite for alcohol?
- What difference can we make in our friendship groups in the way we approach drink and drugs?

People in your Hub will be in a lot of different places with drink and drugs. For some, they may suffer with addiction. Others may be constantly surrounded in their friendship groups and struggle with how to approach it. Some people might not have much contact with either in their day-to-day life. So you may want to give the opportunity to pray for each group, encouraging vulnerability and honesty.