



Session 2: Hooked



This session looks at how we can resist the temptation to do things counter to God's ideal blueprint for us.

Temptation affects us all in different ways and undergirds a host of social issues – divorce, drug abuse, obesity, pornography, debt and addictions. Temptation, according to Dallas Willard, 'is driven by dissatisfaction with life and what you've got'.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

2 Samuel 11.1-17

It was now spring, the time when kings go to war. David sent out the whole Israelite army under the command of Joab and his officers. They destroyed the Ammonite army and surrounded the capital city of Rabbah, but David stayed in Jerusalem.

Late one afternoon, David got up from a nap and was walking around on the flat roof of his palace. A beautiful young woman was down below in her courtyard, bathing as her religion required. David happened to see her, and he sent one of his servants to find out who she was. The servant came back and told David, "Her name is Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam, and she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

David sent some messengers to bring her to his palace. She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she returned home. But later, when she found out that she was going to have a baby, she sent someone to David with this message: "I'm pregnant!" David sent a message to Joab: "Send Uriah the Hittite to me." Joab sent Uriah to David's palace, and David asked him, "Is Joab well? How is the army doing? And how about the war?" Then David told Uriah, "Go home and clean up." Uriah left the king's palace, and David had dinner sent to Uriah's house. But Uriah didn't go home. Instead, he slept outside the entrance to the royal palace, where the king's guards slept. Someone told David that Uriah had not gone home. So the next morning David asked him, "Why didn't you go home? Haven't you been away for a long time?" Uriah answered, "The sacred chest and the armies of Israel and Judah are camping out somewhere in the fields with our commander Joab and his officers and troops. Do you really think I would go home to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? I swear by your life that I would not!"

Setting the scene:

- As King, we might expect David to be at war with his army after hostilities resumed in the more bearable spring weather – but he remains in Jerusalem. This hints at the state of his soul, and makes his next move seem slightly less surprising.
- This is not some accidental slip-up. David could have averted his eyes when he saw Bathsheba bathing. Instead he finds out more about her. When he found out she was married (as was he, let's not forget!), it could have stopped there. David doesn't seem to be doing much to resist temptation: quite the opposite in fact.
- King in Hebrew, means a person who owns everything. David uses his power to manipulate Bathsheba and control her. This inequality of power means she is unable to say 'No' to the king.
- The consequences of this sordid episode are far reaching. Yet David repents (you can read, what many consider to be his confession to God in Psalm 51), and his relationship with God is restored.

Then David said, "Stay here in Jerusalem today, and I will send you back tomorrow." Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. Then the next day, David invited him for dinner. Uriah ate with David and drank so much that he got drunk, but he still did not go home. He went out and slept on his mat near the palace guards. Early the next morning, David wrote a letter and told Uriah to deliver it to Joab. The letter said: "Put Uriah on the front line where the fighting is the worst. Then pull the troops back from him, so that he will be wounded and die."

Joab had been carefully watching the city of Rabbah, and he put Uriah in a place where he knew there were some of the enemy's best soldiers. When the men of the city came out, they fought and killed some of David's soldiers — Uriah the Hittite was one of them.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. What has been 'tempting' for you lately? What 'dissatisfactions' in life are you currently experiencing?

Q2. How do you resist temptations?

Respond

Hooked challenge: this session leads us to explore the issues associated with temptation. As a group, try to create a challenge to help you to overcome temptations and stop you focussing on dissatisfactions, or choose one of the following.

Challenge ideas:

1. Celebration

There is a lot of celebration in the Bible. Joy is strength. Its absence creates weakness and opens us up to temptations. When we've had a bad day, we can be tempted to cheer ourselves up with some retail therapy, eating or drinking too much, or disappearing online. Set aside some time this week to give thanks to God and to enjoy some of his good gifts – enjoy a great movie, dance, sing, feast. True celebration is the inverse of hedonism – which is the demand for more and more pleasure. Celebration is gratitude even for small things and enables us to 'rejoice in the Lord always'.

2. Fasting

Fasting is not about being holy or hungry – it's about controlling desire and impulse. You may think of fasting from food, alcohol, chocolate, or from TV, your iPod or Facebook. You may want to fast from shopping, your credit card or trashy magazines. Use the time to focus on prayer or serving others.*Health Warning – please consult your GP if under medication or medical supervision before an extended food fast.

3. Thankfulness

If temptation is driven by 'dissatisfaction with life and what you've got' – then according to Dallas Willard, the antidote is to 'find a way to be grateful and thankful, and dwell on it'. Take some time to write a list of all the things for which you are grateful and thankful. Keep adding to it each day and share it with the group next time you meet. Colossians 3.15-17 (especially verse 17) may be a helpful Scripture to focus on.

'Why do intelligent people keep getting hooked? What makes those with high IQs so vulnerable to temptation, when it is obviously such a dumb step? We become vulnerable to temptation when we are dissatisfied with our lives. The deeper our dissatisfaction, the deeper our vulnerability, because we were made for soul satisfaction. We cannot live without it. If we do not find satisfaction in God, we will look for it somewhere else, because we will look for it.'

John Ortberg,
The Me I want to Be

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you explore ways to overcome temptations and satisfy unhelpful desires.