

GOING DEEPER
DISCUSSION GUIDE
November 16, 2014



HOOKEE

Discussion Guide

Hooked

Exodus 1.11-14; 3.7-10; Isaiah 61.1-3

Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they answer that they have held back.)

Getting Started:

10 minutes

- When you hear the word “addiction,” what comes to mind? Would you elaborate?

Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Use the notes to explain the background and context of Exodus 1 and 3.
- Read Exodus 1.11-14 aloud, slowly. Read the text once more, attempting to imagine the scene in your mind.
- In what ways did the Israelites move from freedom to bondage?
- Imagine you are an Israelite experiencing this movement. What do you feel? Could you elaborate?
- Consider for a moment the movement from freedom to addiction. In what ways is the experience of Israel at this point similar or dissimilar? Could you explain?

- In what areas of life might people today experience a similar movement to bondage? Do you think people recognize this as a movement to bondage? Why might this be?
- Read Exodus 3.7-10 aloud, slowly. Read the text once more, seeking to experience the scene as one who is present.
- In what way does God respond to the experience of the bondage of his people?
- What might these responses reveal about God’s character and desires?
- What might these responses reveal about the value God places upon those caught in bondage?
- In what ways do people typically view people who are caught up in addictions? In what ways are these similar or dissimilar to God’s own view?
- What hope do we typically have or provide for those caught in addictions?
- Read Isaiah 61.1-3 aloud, slowly.
- In what ways does God promise to move for those caught in bondage? What might these look like in practical terms?
- In Luke 4.14-21, Jesus claims to be the fulfillment of God’s promise through Isaiah. If this is the case, what are the implications for life? The role of the Church in our culture?
- What first steps might be necessary to experience the rescue of Jesus? Which of these steps, if any, might you need to consider taking?
- Conclude in a time of prayer, asking God for the grace to respond to his invitation to freedom.

Context and Background

Addiction

Addiction is the experience of the controlling influence of a person, activity, or substance. Addiction is commonly viewed as something that is typically located within the realm of the use and abuse of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, though it is more regularly being viewed as something that can be associated with food, sex, gambling, and the Internet. Most people agree that addiction is a terrible issue but deny that they experience the power of addiction.

However, the reality is that addiction is a common problem within the context of the American culture, touching the lives of most people to some extent.

Most people agree that addiction is a terrible issue but deny that they experience the power of addiction. However, the reality is that addiction is a common problem within the context of the American culture, touching the lives of most people to some extent.

In the most fundamental sense, addiction is any compulsive, habitual behavior that limits the freedom of human desire. The presence of addiction is typically marked by the following characteristics: (1) Tolerance: the need for more of something to be satisfied; (2) Symptoms of withdrawal: the experience of stress when we do not get what we want; (3) Self-deception: creative energy expended to subvert attempts to control addictive behavior; (4) Loss of will-power; (5) Distortion of attention: the undue focus on the object of addiction to the exclusion of everything else.

We can become addicted to anything and when we are honest, most of us are addicted to something: anger, approval, being good, being loved, calendars, candy, chocolate, cleanliness, eating, exercise, family, fantasies, gambling, gossip, hobbies, sex, tobacco, winning, reading, money, music, caffeine, etc. We cannot experience a good addiction because addiction is really a deep-seated form of idolatry. Addiction displaces our desire and affections for God and supplants God's love as our source of life and worth. The terrible tragedy of addiction is that it splits our person in such a way that we are able to desire freedom and yet we are unable to exert control over our addictive behavior. Simply put, once hooked, we are unable to do more than wish to be free. However, the hope in Christ is that God has moved through Jesus to free us from that which enslaves us so that we might experience freedom (Romans 7.24-25).

The Text

Exodus 1.11-14: *The reality of bondage*

The present passage describes the movement of the Hebrew people from the experience of bondage to the experience of freedom. During the life of Jacob, the land of Canaan experienced a devastating famine (Genesis 41.56-57). In an effort to find relief, Jacob sent his sons to purchase food in Egypt (Genesis 42.1-2). Upon discovering that his son, Joseph, held a position of power in Egypt, Jacob moved his

entire family to Egypt as a place of refuge (Genesis 46-47). For a time, Egypt was a sanctuary for the Hebrew people, but a time came when the population growth of the Israelites caused concern to the Egyptians (Exodus 1.8-10). Therefore, the Pharaoh of Egypt began to move to suppress the Israelites in such a way that the land which formerly had been a place of refuge became a place of bondage.

The movement from freedom to bondage did not happen all at once but it occurred in a progressive manner. The first step involved the movement of Jacob and his family to Egypt. In this move, in order to find safety, Jacob placed his family in a precarious position in which they were in a foreign land under potentially hostile control. For a time, Egypt appeared to be a wonderful refuge, but then the Pharaoh reordered the lives of the Hebrews by removing their independence, placing slave masters over them and making them into a slave caste. Next, Pharaoh sought to give the Israelites a new identity. The Jewish people had, to this point, been shepherds, living off the land (Genesis 47.3-4). Now they are forced to fill the occupations of construction and farming. The remaking of identity, particularly the forcing of the Israelites into unknown and unfamiliar roles, would have added a sense of powerlessness. The implicit idea was to force them into foreign roles where they would fail and thus die. This is population control at its finest and most sinister. When these first steps did not have the desired effect—one needs to imagine the passing of significant time—then Pharaoh took overt measures to destroy the Israelites through ruthless treatment.

Exodus 3.7-10: *The hope of rescue*

Time passed. Generations lived and died under the ruthless bondage of the Pharaohs. Finally, God moved. God moved to draw in Moses as he herded sheep in the wilderness (Exodus 3.1-6). When Moses gave God his attention, God revealed that he was not unaware of what was happening. He was not blind, but he saw the misery of his people. He was not deaf, but he heard their cry of pain. He was not hard-hearted, but he was moved to concern. Therefore, God was going to come down and insert himself into the situation. God planned to rescue his people out of their experience of bondage and lead them on a journey to a place of freedom and provision. Interestingly, God indicated that he was going to accomplish this through an anointed representative, Moses.

Isaiah 61.1-3: *The promise of rescue*

While God moved specifically and decisively for his people who experienced the bondage of Egypt, the question arises as to the nature of God's movement on behalf of those who do not find themselves in Egypt. The experience of bondage is an experience which extends beyond Egypt! Through Isaiah, God promised to move to rescue all people from the experience of bondage. It is important to note that God's method of deliverance is almost identical to that seen in the Exodus journey. First, God would set aside a specific person, anointed to be the agent of God's rescue. To be anointed in the Old Testament symbolized God's movement to empower and grant a person the capacity to do his will (Genesis 41.38; Exodus 31.3; Numbers 11.17, 29). This agent of rescue would come to relieve the experience of pain and to restore people to an experience of freedom. The movement to freedom was a movement out of despair and shame to an experience of strength and fruitfulness (oaks of righteousness). This promise of God through Isaiah was fulfilled in the person of Jesus (Luke 4.14-21). Therefore, the hope of deliverance for all people rests in the person of Jesus.

Real life with Blake:

Addiction was never something we talked about in my family. We had a couple of black sheep in our family who struggled with things like alcohol, womanizing, and gambling, but they were never mentioned or invited to family gatherings. The point was clear. These members were not accepted or even acknowledged because they struggled, and we did not. They were in bondage and we were not. They were addicts and we were not. The longer I live the more I wonder if their struggle was really all that different. Certainly I don't face the identical issues, but, when I am honest, I feel the tug of addiction in my own life. My first volitional act each day is to turn the coffee pot on. If I don't have a cup in my hand shortly, my body begins to scream, and I am tempted to scream at anyone who stands between me and my morning jolt. I feel the rush of having a few people like one of my posts on Facebook, and I feel the sharp longing to go back and check for more, over and over and over. Two minutes have passed. . .and I check again. . .compulsively. Every morning I step on the scale, without fail. I do it to make sure I am healthy, but anxiety fills me if I miss a day. In reality, the compulsion to check Facebook, the anxiety of missing a daily weigh-in, the bodily reaction to coffee are all signs of addiction, my personal addictions. In one form or another, they control me, limit me, drain me of energy, and reorient me in such a way that I seek to find my life in them. But, the truth is that they typically destroy me.

I approach them as my friend, or I did in the beginning, but now I find they have turned on me and it is no longer I who am in control. But something inside me whispers that I was made for more, that I was made to be free. When I turn to the source of the whisper I find Christ, offering his hand to move me from bondage to freedom.

Real life with you:

Addiction is something we don't like to talk about in churches. It is a dirty word we often associate with dirty people we relegate to back pews and hidden rooms where they can attend a local chapter of an "anonymous" meeting. We somehow see these people as the people who have a "problem." The reality is, we all have the very same "problem." Addiction is perhaps one of the biggest issues facing the American culture today. We are all addicts. The only difference is the thing to which we are addicted. The problem with addiction is that it leads us to a state and way of being which is contrary to how we were made. Addiction places us in bondage, but we were meant for freedom. Once we find ourselves in the bondage of addiction—ironically, we often find ourselves bound by things in which we initially took refuge—we discover that our ability to choose is limited. We are no longer in charge. As we lose control, we become people we never intended to be and do things we never dreamed we would do. The great trouble is we do not have the power to stop. We are bound to our addiction. In this darkness, light shines in the person of Christ. God sees. He hears. He cares. He moves to rescue us in his son Jesus. He offers to take us from where we are to the place we were meant to be. The first step to experiencing his freedom is to welcome his deliverer. This week consider the areas of your life where you might be experiencing bondage. It might be something that began innocently as a stress reliever such as playing an online game like Candy Crush, but now you see signs of orienting your life around it. Chances are there is more than one area in which you will find such bondage. Consider being still and holding these before God, inviting him into the experience and welcoming Jesus to speak to you and lead you out of where you are.



SENIOR
PASTOR
BLAKE
SHIPP

 twitter.com/blake_shipp
©2014 Union Center Christian Church