

Study Guide: 8-17-25 - Hooks and Barbs

Overview

This message explores shifting focus from immediate struggles to God's Kingdom purpose, using a fishing hook analogy: the "hook" sets into pre-existing qualities or experiences in us, and the "barb" keeps us engaged. Satan distracts us from purpose, but God uses our past, skills, and struggles to draw us closer. Key biblical example: Saul's transformation into Paul.

Key Scriptures

- **Psalms 90:17**: Establish the work of our hands for God's favor.
- **Acts 8:1-3**: Saul's persecution of the church.
- **Isaiah 53:1-12**: Prophecy of the suffering Messiah (recognized by Saul post-conversion).
- **Isaiah 53:3-4 & 61:3**: Beauty from ashes; carrying sorrows.
- **Genesis 1:11**: Seeds produce after their kind—God plants purpose in us.
- **Acts 5:38-39**: Gamaliel's advice on tolerating Jesus' followers.
- **Jeremiah 29:11**: God's plans for hope and a future.
- **Philippians 3:5-14**: Paul forgets the past, presses toward Christ's prize.
- Other references: Exodus (Moses), various OT/NT figures (Abraham, Joseph, etc.).

Main Points

1. **Look Beyond Struggles to Purpose:**
 - Satan fixates us on short-term problems; God calls us to Kingdom dreams.
 - Question: If money/success were guaranteed, what Kingdom-focused thing would you do?
 - Everything is spiritual; join the "family business" of redemption.
2. **The Hook and Barb Analogy:**
 - Fishing closes the gap between "here" (us) and "there" (purpose/God).
 - God "hooks" us using what's already in us (skills, knowledge, experiences).
 - Examples: Children's learning (building on prior knowledge); personal story of church planting.
3. **What's in You That God Can Hook?:**
 - Saul/Paul: Deep knowledge of Jewish law/Talmud made him ideal to explain Jesus as Messiah.
 - Biblical figures had seeds of greatness: Father in Abraham, leader in Joseph, deliverer in Moses, etc.
 - Past pain/ashes shape us (Isaiah 61:3); don't despise history—God redeems it.
4. **Struggles as Opportunities:**
 - Biggest attacks often oppose our calling (e.g., Eve's trust, Job's integrity, Peter's stability).
 - Saul's zeal against Christians flipped to evangelism.
 - Satan's attacks aim to thwart purpose; trust Jeremiah 29:11.
5. **Encounter Jesus to Embrace the Beyond:**
 - All figures had a divine moment (e.g., Damascus Road for Saul).
 - Forget past mistakes (Philippians 3:13-14); press on through faith.
 - Lay down protests, sins, fears at the altar; obey God's direction.

Key Illustrations

- **Fishing Hooks:** Sharp point hooks the fish; barb prevents escape. God hooks us via internal "snag points" to reel in purpose.
- **Xander Budnick (YouTuber):** Struggles fishing with barbless hooks—contrasts with God's effective "barbed" call.
- **Gamaliel's Fish Dictum (Talmud):** Paul as a "Mediterranean fish" (learned and responsive), aligning with his mission field.
- **Biblical Transformations:** From rejected/orphaned figures to heroes, showing God uses weaknesses.

Reflection Questions

1. What pre-existing skills, experiences, or knowledge in you could God "hook" for His purpose?
2. How has your past (painful or positive) prepared you for a Kingdom role? (Consider Moses or Paul.)
3. Identify a major struggle—could it be an attack opposite your calling? How might God redeem it?
4. Revisit: If guaranteed success, what Kingdom dream would you pursue? How does it involve others?
5. What do you need to "forget" (Phil. 3:13) and press toward? How can an encounter with Jesus help?

Application

- Pray: "God, what do You want me to do for Your Kingdom?" Close eyes, listen, and act.
- Action Step: List 3 "seeds" in you (from Gen. 1:11) and one struggle to reframe as opportunity.
- Group Discussion: Share a "hook moment" where God drew you from "here" to "there."
- Challenge: Read Philippians 3 daily this week; journal how to forget the past and look ahead.