

Key Ideas

- 1. Brain Trick: the anticipation is better than the pleasure.**
Dopamine produces cravings, not real pleasure. We mistake the thrill of the hunt with the actual pleasure of the reward, which results in a letdown.
- 2. Brain Trick: the fear of not fulfilling your desire is fake.**
When dopamine flows, signals are sent to the "alarm system" in your brain, making you feel anxious. The brain uses fear to drive you to the "reward."
- 3. Brain Trap: the more you give in, the more you get hooked, the less you are satisfied.** The more you pursue the "rewards," the more your brain 'locks in' and 'grooves' the circuits in your brain that are involved. You get desensitized over time to the pleasures. You will need stronger doses. You will constantly need something "new."
- 4. Only Jesus can lead you to true satisfaction.**
Jesus shines the light of His truth into the darkness of our mind, exposing the deceptive nature of our cravings and showing us where freedom is.

Key Scriptures

Luke 12:13-21; Mark 4:18-19;
 Psalm 49:16-20; Proverbs 5:3-4;
 1 Timothy 6:6-11
 Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 6:25-34;
 Luke 10:38-42
 John 8:34; Romans 6:19, 7:15;
 Proverbs 5:22, 26:11, 29:6;
 2 Peter 2:19-20
 John 8:31-32, 10:9-10; Romans 7:24-25

Say Nope to Dope: Let Jesus lovingly expose and change the deceptive drives in you.

Questions: to ponder and discuss

- 1** Read Key Idea #1, as well as Luke 12:13-21 and Proverbs 5:3-4. Have you ever experienced a letdown after a thrilling anticipation? How do these Scriptures help us to avoid being duped by the thrill of the hunt?
- 2** Read Key Idea #2, as well as Luke 12:22-34. How does Jesus help alleviate our fears of lacking earthly things?
- 3** Read Key Idea #3, as well as Romans 6:19, Romans 7:15, Proverbs 5:22, and Proverbs 26:11. In what ways has our society — including you and I — become desensitized to things that do not bring honor to Jesus?
- 4** Connection to the Cross: Read Key Idea #4, as well as John 8:31-32. What does this verse say is our part in the process of how Jesus sets us free? How might this result in changes to our brain?

Take It Home:

Key Quotes

- + "As Christians we should embrace science – not be afraid of it and not be at war with it. Science is essentially the seeking of knowledge about creation, and creation reveals the glory of God."
- + "Dopamine flows when the brain senses an opportunity for reward. It makes us feel wide awake, alert, and focused on whatever it is we think will give us pleasure. This alert feeling gives us a thrill, it gets our juices flowing and makes us feel excited. It's the thrill of the hunt... But we confuse the thrill of the hunt with the spoils of capture. They are two completely different things."
- + "When dopamine flows, signals are sent to the Uh Oh Center of the brain. This is where feelings of fear and anxiety arise... So the thrill of anticipation pulls you towards the 'reward' from the front, and fear and anxiety push you from behind."
- + "The more we allow dopamine to flow, the more we cement those circuits in our brain. 'Neurons that fire together, wire together.' Freeways are created in your brain, and all the chemicals want to take the easiest path from here to there – the freeway."

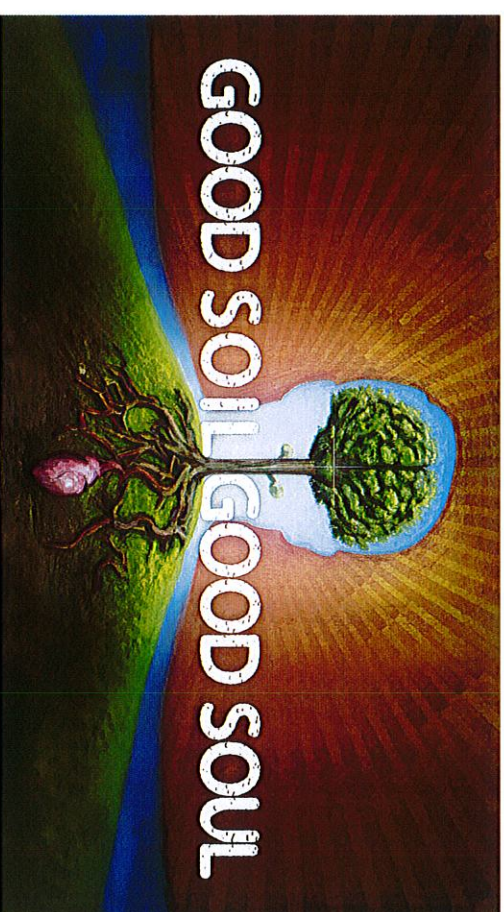
Book Recommendations:

- *The Willpower Instinct* by Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D. *This is not a Christian book but it contains great insights, esp. Ch. 5.*
- *You Are Not Your Brain* by Jeffrey Schwartz, M.D. and Rebecca Gladding, M.D. *Schwartz is a recent convert to Christianity, but this book is written for the general public.*

Exercise:

Pay attention this week to your feelings of anticipation, no matter what it is you are anticipating. Stop and think about the "reward" that you are expecting. Ask yourself and God, "Will it really be as good as I think it will be? Is it worth it? Will it be harmful to me or others in the long run? Will I be okay if I don't get this reward?"

Take note of the times when you sense that your dopamine may be tricking you. Meditate on Luke 12:13-34 this week.



Session 2:

Don't Be Duped by Dopamine

Desires of the Flesh and the Brain

Notes: