



Stephen P. Anderson  
Author of "Seductive Interaction Design"

*"You'll read this. Then you'll hope  
your competition isn't reading this.  
It's that good."*



Andrew Chen  
Technology Writer & Investor

*"When it comes to driving  
engagement and building  
habits, Hooked is an excellent  
guide into the mind of the user."*



Dave McClure  
Founder of 500 Startups


*"Nir's work is an essential crib  
sheet for any startup looking to  
understand user psychology."*

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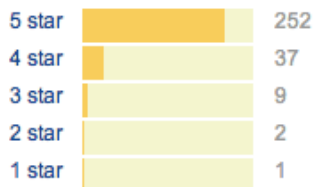
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## **Customer Reviews**

★★★★★ (301)  
4.8 out of 5 stars



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*"The book, very easy to read and understand the topic."*

Radek Vacha | 97 reviewers made a similar statement

*"If you read one 'product book' this year, make sure it's this one."*

Mr Daniel J Groch | 68 reviewers made a similar statement

*"Nir shares some great insight that I applied in my product design."*

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# | introduction |

Seventy-nine percent of smartphone owners check their device within fifteen minutes of waking up every morning.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps more startling, fully one-third of Americans say they would rather give up sex than lose their cell phones.<sup>2</sup>

A 2011 university study suggested people check their phones thirty-four times per day.<sup>3</sup> However, industry insiders believe that number is closer to an astounding 150 daily sessions.<sup>4</sup>

Face it: We're hooked.

The technologies we use have turned into compulsions, if not full-fledged addictions. It's the impulse to check a message notification. It's the pull to visit YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter for just a few minutes, only to find yourself still tapping and scrolling an hour later. It's the urge you likely feel throughout your day but hardly notice.

Cognitive psychologists define *habits* as “automatic behaviors triggered by situational cues”: things we do with little or no conscious thought.<sup>5</sup> The products and services we use habitually alter our everyday behavior, just as their designers intended.<sup>6</sup> Our actions have been engineered.

How do companies, producing little more than bits of code displayed on a screen, seemingly control users' minds? What makes some products so habit forming?

Forming habits is imperative for the survival of many products. As infinite distractions compete for our attention, companies are learning to master novel tactics to stay relevant in users' minds. Amassing millions of users is no longer good enough. Companies increasingly find that their economic value is a function of the strength of the habits they create. In order to win the loyalty of their users and create a product that's regularly used, companies must learn not only what compels users to click but also what makes them tick.

Although some companies are just waking up to this new reality, others are already cashing in. By mastering habit-forming product design, the companies profiled in this book make their goods indispensable.

## FIRST TO MIND WINS

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Companies that form strong user habits enjoy several benefits to their bottom line. These companies attach their product to *internal triggers*. As a result, users show up without any external prompting.

Instead of relying on expensive marketing, habit-forming companies link their services to the users' daily routines and emotions.<sup>7</sup> A habit is at work when users feel a tad bored and instantly open Twitter. They feel a pang of loneliness and before rational thought occurs, they are scrolling through their Facebook feeds. A question comes to mind and before searching their brains, they query Google. The first-to-mind solution wins. In chapter 1 of this book, we explore the competitive advantages of habit-forming products.

How do products create habits? The answer: They manufacture them. While fans of the television show *Mad Men* are familiar with how the ad industry once created consumer desire during Madison Avenue's golden era, those days are long gone. A multiscreen world of ad-wary consumers has rendered Don Draper's big-budget brainwashing useless to all but the biggest brands.

Today, small start-up teams can profoundly change behavior by guiding users through a series of experiences I call *hooks*. The more often users run through these hooks, the more likely they are to form habits.

## How I Got Hooked

In 2008 I was among a team of Stanford MBAs starting a company backed by some of the brightest investors in Silicon Valley. Our mission was to build a platform for placing advertising into the booming world of online social games.

Notable companies were making hundreds of millions of dollars selling virtual cows on digital farms while advertisers were spending huge sums of money to influence people to buy whatever they were peddling. I admit I didn't get it at first and found myself standing at the water's edge wondering, "How do they do it?"

At the intersection of these two industries dependent on mind manipulation, I embarked upon a journey to learn how products change our actions and, at times, create compulsions. How did these companies engineer user behavior? What were the moral implications of building potentially addictive products? Most important, could the same forces that made these experiences so compelling also be used to build products to improve people's lives?

Where could I find the blueprints for forming habits? To my disappointment, I found no guide. Businesses skilled in behavior design guarded their secrets, and although I uncovered books, white papers, and blog posts tangentially related to the topic, there was no how-to manual for building habit-forming products.

I began documenting my observations of hundreds of

companies to uncover patterns in user-experience designs and functionality. Although every business had its unique flavor, I sought to identify the commonalities behind the winners and understand what was missing among the losers.

I looked for insights from academia, drawing upon consumer psychology, human-computer interaction, and behavioral economics research. In 2011 I began sharing what I learned and started working as a consultant to a host of Silicon Valley companies, from small start-ups to Fortune 500 enterprises. Each client provided an opportunity to test my theories, draw new insights, and refine my thinking. I began blogging about what I learned at NirAndFar.com, and my essays were syndicated to other sites. Readers soon began writing in with their own observations and examples.

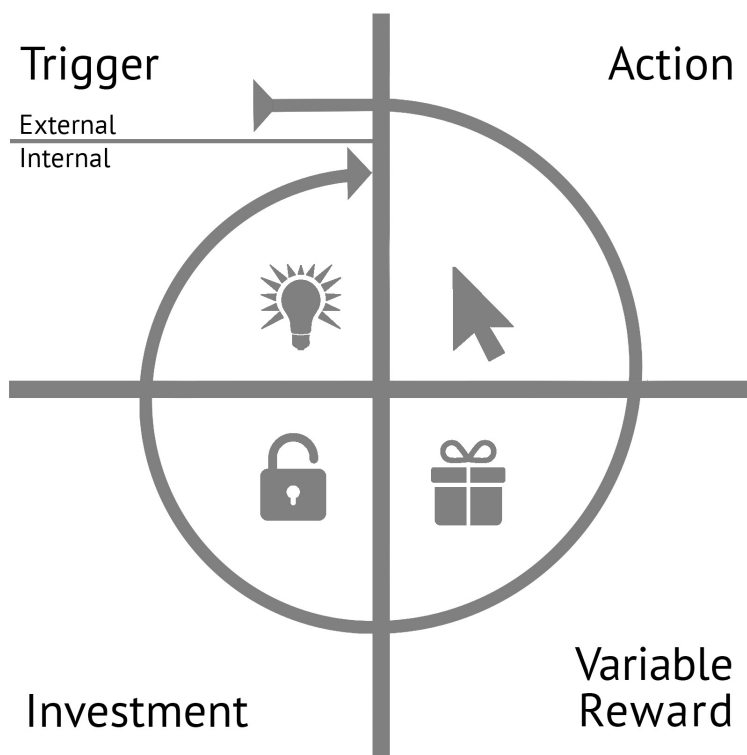
In the fall of 2012 Dr. Baba Shiv and I designed and taught a class at the Stanford Graduate School of Business on the science of influencing human behavior. The next year, I partnered with Dr. Steph Habif to teach a similar course at the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design.

These years of distilled research and real-world experience resulted in the creation of the Hook Model: a four-phase process companies use to form habits.

*Through consecutive Hook cycles, successful products reach their ultimate goal of unprompted user engagement, bringing users back repeatedly, without depending on costly advertising or aggressive messaging.*

While I draw many examples from technology companies given my industry background, hooks are everywhere—in apps, sports, movies, games, and even our jobs. Hooks can be found in virtually any experience that burrows into our minds (and often our wallets). The four steps of the Hook Model provide the framework for the chapters of this book.

### The Hook Model



## 1. Trigger

A *trigger* is the actuator of behavior—the spark plug in the engine. Triggers come in two types: external and internal.<sup>8</sup> Habit-forming products start by alerting users with external triggers like an e-mail, a Web site link, or the app icon on a phone.

For example, suppose Barbra, a young woman in Pennsylvania, happens to see a photo in her Facebook News Feed taken by a family member from a rural part of the state. It's a lovely picture and because she is planning a trip there with her brother Johnny, the external trigger's call to action (in marketing and advertising lingo) intrigues her and she clicks. By cycling through successive hooks, users begin to form associations with internal triggers, which attach to existing behaviors and emotions.

When users start to automatically cue their next behavior, the new habit becomes part of their everyday routine. Over time, Barbra associates Facebook with her need for social connection. Chapter 2 explores external and internal triggers, answering the question of how product designers determine which triggers are most effective.

## 2. Action

Following the trigger comes the action: the behavior done in anticipation of a reward. The simple action of clicking on the interesting picture in her news feed takes Barbra to a



Web site called Pinterest, a “social bookmarking site with a virtual pinboard.”<sup>9</sup>

This phase of the Hook, as described in chapter 3, draws upon the art and science of usability design to reveal how products drive specific user actions. Companies leverage two basic pulleys of human behavior to increase the likelihood of an action occurring: the ease of performing an action and the psychological motivation to do it.<sup>10</sup>

Once Barbra completes the simple action of clicking on the photo, she is dazzled by what she sees next.

### 3. Variable Reward

What distinguishes the Hook Model from a plain vanilla feedback loop is the Hook’s ability to create a craving. Feedback loops are all around us, but predictable ones don’t create desire. The unsurprising response of your fridge light turning on when you open the door doesn’t drive you to keep opening it again and again. However, add some variability to the mix—suppose a different treat magically appears in your fridge every time you open it—and voilà, intrigue is created.

Variable rewards are one of the most powerful tools companies implement to hook users; chapter 4 explains them in further detail. Research shows that levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine surge when the brain is expecting a reward.<sup>11</sup> Introducing variability multiplies the

effect, creating a focused state, which suppresses the areas of the brain associated with judgment and reason while activating the parts associated with wanting and desire.<sup>12</sup> Although classic examples include slot machines and lotteries, variable rewards are prevalent in many other habit-forming products.

When Barbra lands on Pinterest, not only does she see the image she intended to find, but she is also served a multitude of other glittering objects. The images are related to what she is generally interested in—namely things to see on her upcoming trip to rural Pennsylvania—but there are other things that catch her eye as well. The exciting juxtaposition of relevant and irrelevant, tantalizing and plain, beautiful and common, sets her brain's dopamine system aflutter with the promise of reward. Now she's spending more time on Pinterest, hunting for the next wonderful thing to find. Before she knows it, she's spent forty-five minutes scrolling.

Chapter 4 also explores why some people eventually lose their taste for certain experiences and how variability impacts their retention.

## 4. Investment

The last phase of the Hook Model is where the user does a bit of work. The investment phase increases the odds that the user will make another pass through the Hook cycle in

the future. The investment occurs when the user puts something into the product of service such as time, data, effort, social capital, or money.

However, the investment phase isn't about users opening up their wallets and moving on with their day. Rather, the investment implies an action that improves the service for the next go-around. Inviting friends, stating preferences, building virtual assets, and learning to use new features are all investments users make to improve their experience. These commitments can be leveraged to make the trigger more engaging, the action easier, and the reward more exciting with every pass through the Hook cycle. Chapter 5 delves into how investments encourage users to cycle through successive hooks.

As Barbra enjoys endlessly scrolling through the Pinterest cornucopia, she builds a desire to keep the things that delight her. By collecting items, she gives the site data about her preferences. Soon she will follow, pin, repin, and make other investments, which serve to increase her ties to the site and prime her for future loops through the Hook.

## **A New Superpower**

Habit-forming technology is already here, and it is being used to mold our lives. The fact that we have greater access to the web through our various connected devices—smartphones and tablets, televisions, game consoles, and

wearable technology—gives companies far greater ability to affect our behavior.

As companies combine their increased connectivity to consumers, with the ability to collect, mine, and process customer data at faster speeds, we are faced with a future where everything becomes potentially more habit forming. As famed Silicon Valley investor Paul Graham writes, “Unless the forms of technological progress that produced these things are subject to different laws than technological progress in general, the world will get more addictive in the next 40 years than it did in the last 40.”<sup>13</sup> Chapter 6 explores this new reality and discusses the morality of manipulation.

Recently, a blog reader e-mailed me, “If it can’t be used for evil, it’s not a superpower.” He’s right. And under this definition, building habit-forming products is indeed a superpower. If used irresponsibly, bad habits can quickly degenerate into mindless, zombielike addictions.

Did you recognize Barbra and her brother Johnny from the previous example? Zombie film buffs likely did. They are characters from the classic horror flick *Night of the Living Dead*, a story about people possessed by a mysterious force, which compels their every action.<sup>14</sup>

No doubt you’ve noticed the resurgence of the zombie genre over the past several years. Games like *Resident Evil*, television shows like *The Walking Dead*, and movies including *World War Z* are a testament to the creatures’ growing appeal. But why are zombies suddenly so fascinating? Perhaps technology’s unstoppable progress—ever more pervasive

and persuasive—has grabbed us in a fearful malaise at the thought of being involuntarily controlled.

Although the fear is palpable, we are like the heroes in every zombie film—threatened but ultimately more powerful. I have come to learn that habit-forming products can do far more good than harm. Choice architecture, a concept described by famed scholars Thaler, Sunstein, and Balz in their same-titled scholarly paper, offers techniques to influence people's decisions and affect behavioral outcomes. Ultimately, though, the practice should be “used to help nudge people to make better choices (as judged by themselves).”<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, this book teaches innovators how to build products to help people do the things they already want to do but, for lack of a solution, don't do.

*Hooked* seeks to unleash the tremendous new powers innovators and entrepreneurs have to influence the everyday lives of billions of people. I believe the trinity of access, data, and speed presents unprecedented opportunities to create positive habits.

*When harnessed correctly, technology can enhance lives through healthful behaviors that improve our relationships, make us smarter, and increase productivity.*

The Hook Model explains the rationale behind the design of many successful habit-forming products and services we use daily. Although not exhaustive given the vast amount of academic literature available, the model is intended to be

a practical tool (rather than a theoretical one) made for entrepreneurs and innovators who aim to use habits for good. In this book I have compiled the most relevant research, shared actionable insights, and provided a practical framework designed to increase the innovator's odds of success.

Hooks connect the user's problem with a company's solution frequently enough to form a habit. My goal is to provide you with a deeper understanding of how certain products change what we do and, by extension, who we are.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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At the end of each section, you'll find a few bulleted takeaways. Reviewing them, jotting them down in a notebook, or sharing them on a social network is a great way to pause, reflect, and reinforce what you have read.

Building a habit-forming product yourself? If so, the "Do This Now" sections at the end of subsequent chapters will help guide your next steps.

## REMEMBER & SHARE

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- *Habits* are defined as "behaviors done with little or no conscious thought."

- The convergence of access, data, and speed is making the world a more habit-forming place.
- Businesses that create customer habits gain a significant competitive advantage.
- The Hook Model describes an experience designed to connect the user's problem to a solution frequently enough to form a habit.
- The Hook Model has four phases: *trigger*, *action*, *variable reward*, and *investment*.

## Case Study: The Bible App

In the previous chapter I urged you to be a facilitator and use the tools in this book to improve the lives of others. I encouraged you to align your work with a purpose that provides you with meaning and helps cultivate meaning for others. This is not only a moral imperative, it's good business practice.

*The most highly regarded entrepreneurs are driven by meaning, a vision for greater good that drives them forward.*

Start-ups are grueling and only the most fortunate persevere before finding success. If you only build for fame or fortune, you will likely find neither. Build for meaning, though, and you can't go wrong.

The Hook Model is a framework based on human psychology and a close examination of today's most successful habit-forming products. Now that you have an understanding of the model and the psychology behind why we do the things we do, let's study how it all comes together in one of the world's most popular apps. Whether or not you agree with the mission of the app described below is



unimportant. The lesson here is how a technology company created a user habit while staying true to the founder's moral calling.

It's not often an app has the power to keep someone out of a strip club. Yet according to Bobby Gruenewald, CEO of YouVersion, that's exactly what his technology did. Gruenewald says a user of his Bible verse app walked into a business of ill repute when suddenly, seemingly out of the heavens, he received a notification on his phone. "God's trying to tell me something!" Gruenewald recalled the user saying. "I just walked into a strip club—and, man—the Bible just texted me!"

In July 2013 YouVersion announced a monumental milestone for the app, placing it in a rare strata of technology companies. The simply named Bible App has been downloaded to more than 100 million devices and is growing.<sup>1</sup> Gruenewald says a new install occurs every 1.3 seconds.

On average, sixty-six thousand people open the app every second—and sometimes the open rate is much higher. Every Sunday, Gruenewald says, preachers around the world tell congregants to "take out your Bibles or YouVersion app. And, we see a huge spike."

The market for religious apps is fiercely competitive. A *Bible* word search in the Apple App Store returns 5,185 results. But among all the choices, YouVersion's Bible App seems to be the chosen one, ranking at the top of the list and boasting over 641,000 reviews.

How did YouVersion come to dominate the digital "word

of God”? It turns out there is much more behind the app’s success than missionary zeal. It’s a case study of how technology can change behavior by marrying the principles of consumer psychology with the latest in big data analytics.

According to industry insiders, the YouVersion Bible could be worth a bundle. Jules Maltz, who is the general partner at Institutional Venture Partners (IVP), told me, “As a rule of thumb, a company this size could be worth two hundred million dollars and up.”

Maltz should know. His firm announced an investment in another pre-revenue app, Snapchat, at an \$800 million valuation in July 2013.<sup>2</sup> Maltz justifies the price by pointing to the per-user valuations of other tech companies such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, each of which commanded astronomical investment sums well before turning a profit. Maltz was quick to add, “Of course, this assumes the company can monetize through advertising.”

## **In the Beginning**

Gruenewald is a quick-thinking, fast-talking man. During our conversation he pulled up statistics in real time, stopping himself midsentence whenever relevant data flashed on his screen. As Gruenewald preaches on about best practices in mobile app development, I need to occasionally interrupt him to ask clarifying questions. My words stumble over his enthusiasm as he bears witness to what he’s learned

building his app. He spouts user retention figures with the same gusto I'd imagine he might proclaim scripture.

"Unlike other companies, when we started, we were not building a Bible reader for seminary students. YouVersion was designed to be used by everyone, every day," Gruenewald says, attributing much of the app's success to a relentless focus on creating habitual Bible readers. The Bible App's success is broken down into the language of habit formation more commonly seen in psychology textbooks. The cues, behaviors, and rewards of communing with the Lord are bullet-pointed, ready for our discussion.

"Bible study guides are nothing new," Gruenewald says. "People have been using them with pen and paper long before we came along." But I soon find out, the Bible App is much more than a mobile study guide.

The first version of YouVersion, in fact, was not mobile at all. "We originally started as a desktop Web site, but that really didn't engage people in the Bible," explains Gruenewald. "It wasn't until we tried a mobile version that we noticed a difference in people, including ourselves, turning to the Bible more because it was on a device they always had with them."

This is not surprising. The Fogg Behavior Model (see chapter 3) notes that for an action to occur, users must receive a trigger and have sufficient motivation and ability to complete it. If any of these elements are missing or inadequate at the moment the trigger arises, the action will not occur.

The omnipresence of Bible App makes it far more accessible than its Web site predecessor, giving users the ability to open the mobile app when triggered by the pastor's instructions or when feeling inspired at other moments throughout their day. Its users take it everywhere, reading the scripture in even the most unsanctified places. The company revealed that 18 percent of readers report using the Bible App in the bathroom.<sup>3</sup>

## How to Form a God Habit

Gruenewald acknowledges his Bible App enjoyed the good fortune of being among the first of its kind at the genesis of Apple's App Store in 2008. To take advantage of this newly established marketplace, Gruenewald quickly converted his Web site into a mobile app optimized for reading. The app caught the rising tide, but soon a wave of competition followed. If his app was to reign supreme, Gruenewald needed to get users hooked quickly.

That's when Gruenewald says he implemented a plan—actually, many plans. A signature of the Bible App is its selection of over four hundred reading plans—a devotional iTunes of sorts, catering to an audience with diverse tastes, troubles, and tongues. Given my personal interest and research into habit-forming technology, I decided to start a Bible-reading plan of my own. A plan titled “Addictions” seemed appropriate.

For those who have yet to form a routine around biblical study, reading plans provide structure and guidance. “Certain sections of the Bible can be difficult for people to get through,” Gruenewald admits. “By offering reading plans with different small sections of the Bible each day, it helps keep [readers] from giving up.”

*The app chunks out and sequences the text by separating it into bite-size pieces.*

By parsing readings into digestible communion wafer-size portions, the app focuses the reader’s brain on the small task at hand while avoiding the intimidation of reading the entire book.

## Holy Triggers

Five years of testing and tinkering have helped Gruenewald’s team discover what works best. The Bible App’s reading plans are now tuned to immaculate perfection, and Gruenewald has learned that frequency of use is paramount: “We’ve always focused on daily reading. Our entire structure for plans focuses on daily engagement.”

To get users to open the app every day, Gruenewald makes sure he sends effective cues—like the notification sent to the sinner in the strip club. Gruenewald admits,

though, that he stumbled upon the power of good triggers. “At first we were very worried about sending people notifications. We didn’t want to bother them too much.”

To test how much of a cyber cross users were willing to bear, Gruenewald decided to run an experiment. “For Christmas, we sent people a message from the app. Just a ‘Merry Christmas’ in various languages.” The team was prepared to hear from disgruntled users annoyed by the message. “We were afraid people would uninstall the app,” Gruenewald says. “But just the opposite happened. People took pictures of the notification on their phones and started sharing them on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. They felt God was reaching out to them.” Today, Gruenewald says, triggers play an important role in every reading plan.

On my own plan, I receive a daily notification—an owned external trigger—on my phone. It simply says, “Don’t forget to read your Addictions reading plan.” Ironically, the addiction I’m trying to cure is my dependency on digital gadgetry, but what the hell, I’ll fall off the wagon just this once.

In case I somehow avoid the first message, a red badge over a tiny Holy Bible icon on my phone cues me again. If I forget to start the first day of a plan, I’ll receive a message suggesting that perhaps I should try a different, less-challenging plan. I also have the option of receiving verse through e-mail. And if I slip up and miss a few days, another e-mail reminds me to get back on track.

The Bible app also comes with a virtual congregation of

sorts. Members of the site tend to send encouraging words to one another, delivering even more triggers. According to the company's publicist, "Community e-mails can serve as a nudge to open the app." These relationship-based external triggers are everywhere in the Bible app and are one of the keys to keeping users engaged.

## Glory Be in the Data

Gruenewald's team sifts through behavioral data collected from millions of readers to better understand what users want from the app. "We just have so much data flowing through our system," Gruenewald says. The data reveals important insights on what drives user retention. High on the list of findings is the importance of ease of use, which came up throughout our conversation.

In line with the work of psychologists from early Gestalt psychologist Kurt Lewin to modern-day researchers, the app uses the principle that by making an intended action easier to do, people will do it more often.

The Bible App is designed to make absorbing the Word as frictionless as possible. For example, to make the Bible App habit easier to adopt, users who prefer listening over reading can simply tap a small icon to play an audio track read with the dramatic bravado of Charlton Heston himself.

Gruenewald says his data also revealed that changing the order of the Bible by placing the more interesting

sections up front and saving the boring bits for later increased completion rates. Furthermore, daily reading plans are kept to a simple inspirational thought and a few short verses for newcomers. The idea is to get neophytes into the ritual for a few minutes each day until the routine becomes a facet of their everyday lives.

## Rewards from the Lord

Gruenewald says the connection people have with scripture taps into deep emotions that “we need to use responsibly.” Readers who form a habit of using the app turn to it not only when they see a notification on their phone, but also whenever they feel low and need a way to lift their spirits.

“We believe that the Bible is a way God speaks to us,” Gruenewald says. “When people see a verse, they see wisdom or truth they can apply to their lives or a situation they’re going through.” Skeptics might call this subjective validation, and psychologists term it *the Forer effect*, but to the faithful it amounts to personally communicating with God.

Upon opening the Bible App, I find a specially selected verse waiting for me on the topic of “Addictions.” With just two taps I’m reading 1 Thessalonians 5:11—encouragement for the “children of the day,” imploring them with the words, “let us be sober.” It’s easy to see how these comforting words could serve as a sort of prize wrapped inside the app, helping readers feel better.



Gruenewald says his Bible App also offers an element of mystery and variability. “One woman would stay up until just past midnight to know what verse she had received for her next day,” Gruenewald says. The unknown—in this case, which verse will be chosen for the reader and how it relates to their personal struggle—becomes an important driver of the reading habit.

As for my own reward, after finishing my verse, I received affirmation from a satisfying “Day Complete!” screen. A check mark appeared near the scripture I had read and another one was placed on my reading plan calendar. Skipping a day would mean breaking the chain of checked days, employing the endowed progress effect (previously discussed in chapter 3)—a tactic also used by video game designers to encourage progression.

As habit forming as the Bible App’s reading plans can be, they are not for everyone. In fact, Gruenewald reports most users downloaded the app but never register for an account with YouVersion. Millions choose to not follow any plan, opting instead to use the app as a substitute for their paper Bibles. But to Gruenewald, using the app in this way suits him fine. Unregistered readers are still helping to grow the app. In fact, social media is abuzz with the two hundred thousand pieces of content shared from the app every twenty-four hours.

To help spread the app, a new verse greets the reader on the first page. Below the verse a large blue button reads

“Share Verse of the Day.” One click and the daily scripture is blasted to Facebook or Twitter.

The drivers behind recently read scripture have not been widely studied. However, one reason may be the reward of portraying oneself in a positive light, also known as the *humble-brag*.<sup>4</sup> A Harvard meta-analysis, “Disclosing information about the self is intrinsically rewarding,” found the act “engages neural and cognitive mechanisms associated with reward.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, sharing feels so good that one study found “individuals were willing to forgo money to disclose about the self.”

There are many opportunities to share verse from within the Bible App, but one of Gruenewald’s most effective distribution channels is not online but in row—that is, the pews where churchgoers sit side by side every week.

“People tell each other about the app because they use it surrounded by people who ask about it,” Gruenewald says. The app always sees a spike in new downloads on Sundays when people are most likely to share it through word of mouth.

However, nothing signals the reign of Gruenewald’s Bible App quite like the way some preachers have come to depend upon it. YouVersion lets religious leaders input their sermons into the app so their congregants can follow along in real time—book, verse, and passage—all without flipping a page. Once the head of the church is hooked, the congregation is sure to follow.

Using the Bible App at church not only has the benefit

of driving growth, it also builds commitment. Every time users highlight a verse, add a comment, create a bookmark, or share from the app, they invest in it.

As described in chapter 5, Dan Ariely and Michael Norton have shown the effect small amounts of work have on the way people value various products. This so-called IKEA effect illustrates the connection between labor and perceived worth.

It is reasonable to think that the more readers put into the Bible App in the form of small investments, the more it becomes a repository of their history of worship. Like a book that is dog-eared and filled with scribbled insights and wisdom, the app becomes a treasured asset that won't easily be discarded. The more readers use the Bible App, the more valuable it becomes to them. Switching to a different digital Bible—God forbid—becomes less likely with each new revelation users type into (or extract from) the app, further securing YouVersion's dominion.

Gruenewald claims he is not in competition with anyone, but he does on occasion rattle off app store categories where his Bible App holds a high ranking. His app's place at the top of the charts appears secure now that the Bible has crossed its hundred millionth install. Yet Gruenewald plans to continue sifting through the terabytes of data in search of new ways to increase the reach of his app and make his version of the Bible even more habit-forming. To its tens of millions of regular users, Gruenewald's app is a Godsend.

## REMEMBER & SHARE

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- The Bible App was far less engaging as a desktop Web site; the mobile interface increased accessibility and usage by providing frequent triggers.
- The Bible App increases users' ability to take action by front-loading interesting content and providing an alternative audio version.
- By separating the verses into small chunks, users find the Bible easier to read on a daily basis; not knowing what the next verse will be adds a variable reward.
- Every annotation, bookmark, and highlight stores data (and value) in the app, further committing users.

**Get the rest of *Hooked*, order now:**

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Ryan Hoover's writing has appeared in Forbes, Fast Company, The Next Web, and TechCrunch. After working on *Hooked* with Nir Eyal, Ryan founded Product Hunt, a site that's been called "*the* place to discover the next big things in tech." Ryan blogs at [ryanhoover.me](http://ryanhoover.me)