Gambling, part 2 / A Paralyzed Man Healed

Wife of gambler: “I’m feeling really afraid. I’ve just found out that my husband has been gambling for a long time. I didn’t know. I feel foolish...I didn’t see the signs...he always seemed to be occupied with other things. He didn’t have money to give me for buying food. He told me not to worry...that everything was ok...he would have the money soon. But I’ve just found a whole lot of bills – for our house rent, and for electricity...that have not been paid. There are letters threatening to cut off the electricity. And today I found one that said if we didn’t pay the rent we would be put out of our home. I’m scared and I don't know what to do!”

Tammy: Hello, I’m Tammy. Carol and I are so happy to welcome you to Women of Hope. Carol, that worried and anxious woman we just heard was your friend, wasn’t it?

Carol: Yes, Tammy, and this is what she said to me one day when we went out together for lunch. It was a shock to me, to discover that her husband had gambled so much money that they were facing being thrown out of their home.

Tammy: I wonder if you know how it feels to suddenly discover that your husband, or maybe your son, or someone else in the family has become addicted to gambling.

I wonder if you were with us when we spoke about gambling last time? We talked about how gambling is an activity where you bet money on a game or activity. Gambling is something that can be seen as a fun time, but in fact it can become an addiction that causes problems in people’s relationships, finances and health. Today we want to talk together about how you can get help for someone with an addiction to gambling and how you can also protect yourself.

Carol: Gambling can become an addiction, just like people can become addicted to drugs, alcohol or pornography. People who are suffering from an addiction are often not thinking properly. Even though they may love and care for you, someone with a gambling addiction may often act in unexpected ways and may even harm those they love so that they can keep gambling.

So it’s important that if you think a close family member has become addicted to gambling, then you must protect yourself as much as possible. This is a difficult thing to do, especially if it is your husband, but you need to try to protect yourself and your children from more harm. What sort of help might there be in your family and your community? Let’s talk about some of the ways that you can protect yourself or help someone else protect themselves.

Tammy: If at all possible, take control of your household's money, or ask someone else who you trust to help. If you know what money you have, what debts you owe and what costs you have, then you can make some wise decisions about how to spend the money. Try not to leave money around the house, where it can be easily found. If your family has money on pay day or when the markets have been held, try to pay off any debts that you have straight away. Also, try to buy the food supplies for the future as soon as possible too, before the money can be gambled away.

Carol: Another way to protect yourself in this situation is to tell someone else about what's happening. You don't need to tell lots of people, but it's important that you share this problem with a trusted friend or family member, so they can support you. Living with someone facing an addiction is hard, you may blame yourself, worry about your family and may even be abused for spending money on things your children need like food and clothing. It's easy to blame yourself, feel embarrassed or think that they won't do it again. But this is just not true. You are not the only one who has a gambler in your family! And most importantly, this is not your fault! Don't live with this problem all alone! By telling a family member or a friend, you will also have a safe place to go to if you need it.

This is what my friend did. She told me, and another close friend, together so we could support her and pray for her. And she talked with her daughter about it. They decided to go and see a counsellor who could help them to know what to do to protect themselves, so that they wouldn't be left 'out on the street' when the money finally ran out.

Tammy: You can also protect yourself by thinking about what you could say to the person who is gambling when they come and ask you for money. Your adult child, your neighbour, an uncle or an aunt, a niece or a nephew... any one of them could be the one facing a gambling problem. What will you do when they come to your home to ask you for money? Will you give them some? How much? How will you explain to them that you have no money to give them without shaming them?

Thinking about this situation before it happens can be helpful, this way you can plan what you will say in a calm manner. I never say things the way I want to, when I'm upset or feeling pressured. So perhaps you could practice beforehand what you are going to say.

Carol: That's a really good idea Tammy – to be prepared, to think carefully about what you want to say, and practice saying it beforehand. O r you might want to tell the gambler before they even ask, that you will not lend them any money or any more money because you are not going to m support their addiction.

You see people addicted to gambling will sometimes do anything to get money from you. They will try to trick you into giving them money. So don't be surprised if they plead with you and tell you they need the money for something that sounds really necessary. They may try to threaten you to get money from you. They may say something like, "If you don't give me the money I'll hurt you or one of your family," or they may even threaten to hurt themselves...or take their own life.

They may tell you lies about others, like that their child is ill or that they need to see a doctor so that you will give them money they want. Practice your answers, so you will know what to say when they ask.

Tammy: It's important to know that there are some truths about gambling that you need to remember. You might need to remind yourself of these often.
- You cannot force your family member or friend to stop gambling. Only the gambler can do that!
- You cannot force someone to say that their gambling is problem, but you can tell the gambler of the ways their gambling is hurting you.
- You are not to blame for their behaviour. No matter what lies they tell you, this is *not your fault.*

Carol: And don't make threats unless you intend to carry them out. Don't say things like, "If you gamble again, I will never speak to you again." Or, "If I find out you played cards again I will take the children and move to my father's house!"

If at any time you feel you need to stop your contact with a gambler for your own safety, then do it. Your safety and the safety of your children is most important. But don't make threats to do something that you're not going to do!

Tammy: Today we're talking together about how to help someone who has an addiction to gambling, and how to protect yourself and your family.

Carol: Gamblers need the *support* of their family and friends to help them stop gambling. If it's safe to do so, continue to invite them to family gatherings and parties. Let them know you value them and love them, even if they have the gambling problem. Remember that your loved one is not just "the gambler". They are a person with feelings, interests and shared experiences with you. By remembering this, you can be more calm and controlled while talking to them about their problem. But the decision to quit has to be theirs. You cannot make someone stop gambling.

You can help your loved one though in other ways. Explain to your children what you know about gambling and addictions. This will help them to understand why the gambler acts the way that they do. Perhaps you could explain that gambling is like an illness that needs treatment, before the person can think and act normally again.

Tammy: That's good advice Carol. In many cases, a gambler *will* need the advice of a counsellor to help break the addiction to gambling. Your help alone may not be enough to help the gambler break free of this problem. But you may be able to help them *to find* a counsellor or an expert in this area to help them. You could even offer to drive them to the counsellor or go with them for support. Finding someone to help may be difficult, but your doctor, nurse, health care worker, community leader or a church minister may all be good people to ask for advice. One of these people may also be qualified to counsel and support your loved one who is struggling with gambling.

Carol: Quitting any addiction is hard work. Sometimes the need to gamble will just be too much, and even though they're trying very hard to quit, they will find themselves back gambling again. In these times it may be helpful to talk about some of the things that trigger their need to gamble. For example, for some people, just feeling sad or bad can trigger the urge to gamble. So you could help your loved one to plan out some other things to do, for when these times of temptation come.

Perhaps your loved one knows they really want to gamble after work, when they're lonely and want some company. So instead of gambling they could arrange to meet up with you or a friend, or join a club to help them not feel so lonely. If possible, they could take away the temptation by arranging to have their bills paid directly from their pay. Or their pay could be given to their spouse, so that debts can be paid off a little at a time.

Tammy: Another person may gamble because they're bored on a Saturday afternoon. What could they do instead? Help them make a list of things to do They could go for a walk, meet their friends at the coffee shop, clean the house or go fishing. Having a plan can sometimes make it easier to resist the temptation to gamble.

You can also help them by being a good listener when they need to talk. Many people who struggle with an addiction to gambling end up committing suicide because they feel like their life has become so bad that this is the only solution. You could be the supportive person who helps when they need someone to talk to. You could be the one who tells them they've done well when they stick to their budget or manage to stop gambling for a period of time.

Carol: Today we've been talking about helping a loved one who is suffering from an addiction. One big part of breaking the addiction cycle is having other people who care about them to stand with them at this difficult time. As I was thinking about this, I remembered a story in God's word, the Bible, and I would like to read it to you from Mark's gospel.

'Jesus came back to Capernaum. The news spread that he was back home. A large crowd gathered to hear him speak. The house was so full that there was no place to stand, not even outside the door. While Jesus was teaching, some people brought a paralyzed man to see him. He was being carried by four of them. But they could not get the man inside to Jesus because the house was so full of people. So they went to the roof above Jesus and made a hole in it. Then they lowered the mat with the paralyzed man on it. When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the paralyzed man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."… (Then) Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, stand up. Take your mat and go home." Immediately the paralyzed man stood up. He picked up his mat and walked out of the room. Everyone could see him. They were amazed and praised God. They said, "This is the most amazing thing we have ever seen!"'

I love this story! I love imagining the scene in my mind. Can you picture the house? The house with every small space filled with people. They were sitting and standing everywhere. People squashed up close to each other to hear what Jesus was saying. The writer, Mark, tells us that even the space outside the door was surrounded with lots of people.

Tammy: And into this picture come five people. Four people, carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They are there to see Jesus. They knew that Jesus had been healing people and so they brought their friend to see him. Can you imagine their disappointment when they saw the crowds of people in and around the house? I wonder if they were tempted to go just turn around and home again. I'm so glad that they didn't! Instead they climbed onto the roof, made a hole in the roof and lowered their friend down into the room where Jesus was.

Carol: Jesus healed the paralyzed man, allowing him to pick up his mat and walk out of the room and the people rejoiced and praised God. But the part I love most in this story is why Jesus healed the paralyzed man! Do you remember what the writer Mark told us? Let me read that part again to you. It says, '*When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the paralyzed man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."'*

Did you hear that? Jesus healed the man, because of the faith "they" had. It was the faith of the group of five people that he noticed.

Our relationship with God is a personal one that only *we* can begin and continue. But having others to help us on our journey to get to know God can be of great value. This is one benefit of belonging to a group of believers, or a church. We can be helped by the faith of the other believers.

Tammy: The paralyzed man would never have been able to get himself to the house where Jesus was. He needed his four friends to help him get there. We too need other believers to help us get to know Jesus more.

Other believers will pray for us and with us in hard times. Friends who know Jesus can share their experiences and knowledge of God with us so we can learn more. Together, we can encourage and correct each other, in what is godly and true. When hard times come, our friends who follow Jesus, can support us when our family or friends turn their backs on us. Friends can also help us understand the answers to our questions

Carol: Having some friends who follow Jesus too, can be a great support to you. You might know some other people who follow Jesus in your family or town that you could spend time with. Or you might need to find some. There may be a church in your area. This is really just a big group of people, who want to follow Jesus, who gather together to learn, worship and pray...a big group of friends really.

Are you a follower of Jesus? If so, then perhaps you could be like the friends of the paralyzed man and help someone else get to know Jesus. Because in the words you speak, the way you act and the way you love others, people may just see something different about you, which could let you tell them about Jesus!

Tammy: Is Jesus someone you would like to know more about? Then maybe it's time for you to find some others who follow Him so that you have some people you can ask questions...and learn more.

Carol: It's that time again...already...time to go. We would love to hear your story, or answer any questions you would like to ask us.

Tammy: You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope. The email address is TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org. That's TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org. Or if you've missed a program or you want to hear it again, visit our website TWRWomenofHope.org or visit our Facebook page. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week, filled with God's blessings.

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