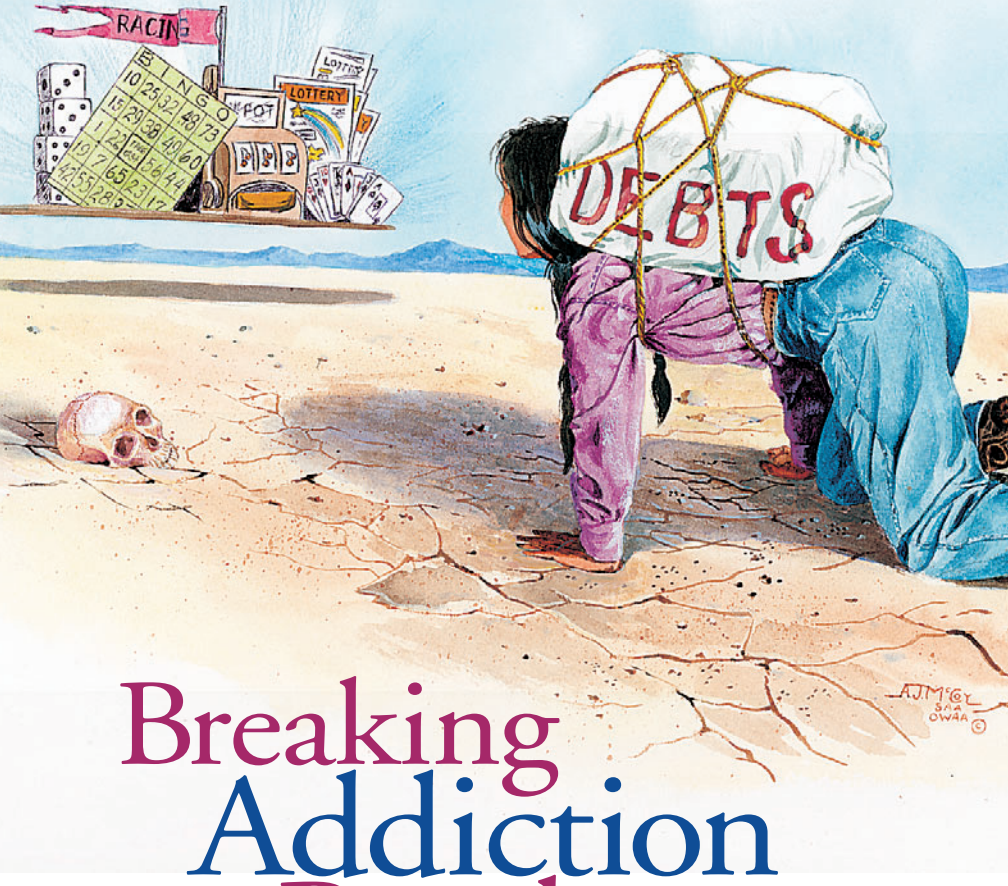

Breaking Addiction Bondage

For ten years Lex Varrila worked as a mob bookie for gamblers on three college campuses. “My job,” Lex said, “was to separate the smart, confident, but unwary

students from their money and financial assets by getting them to bet on sporting events.

"They all knew I was mob connected," said Lex, "and so the idea of not paying up their losses was never a problem. Most of my student gamblers were the brightest young minds our country produces. They fig-

ured it would be a cinch to win a few bucks gambling throughout the school year. But they were 100 percent wrong.

"In the ten years I was an active bookie, not a single player of mine had a winning year. I never heard of, or read of, one who made money gambling. Yet I never

experienced a shortage of players. Every year there was an arrival of new faces ripe to be sucked into the 'fun' available through gambling.

"Fun is the way it all begins, but it is never the way it ends. You would think anyone in his right mind would see the stupidity of gambling, when they see their friends become involved in stealing, bank fraud, phony checks and loans, counterfeit currency, insurance scams, and even hijacking cars in order to support their gambling addiction.

In the ten years I was an active bookie, not a single player of mine had a winning year. Yet I never experienced a shortage of players.

"It wasn't until one student I booked bets for exhausted all of his sources of financial help from his friends and family, and for a debt of only $280, hurled himself from a bridge to his death, that I closed shop and turned my back for good on the predatory disease of gambling."

Source: *The Oregonian.* March 12, 1999.

Gambling isn't a greed-for-money problem; it is a compulsive addiction. The difference is our focus. We often do things that are neither right nor logical, as long as it helps us find immediate freedom from frustrations,

un is the way it all begins, but it is never the way it ends.

fear, loneliness, insecurity, and boredom. Like alcoholism, drug abuse, overeating, and other addictions, gambling temporarily gets our minds off our troubles. We all experience frustrations from time to time. But where we turn for relief makes all the difference. Gambling, like alcohol, gets you away from your pain, but shortly it will turn your fun or freedom into a nightmare.

Since video poker and keno games became legalized, the plague of gambling has increased dramatically! It affects people of every walk of life—doctors, soccer moms, retired folks, and even teenagers. Three out of five who begin gambling for fun end up addicts. One never knows whether he/she will be affected by gambling addiction until it is too late.

Today gambling offers something for everyone—whether it is cards, sports, video poker, pull tabs, or lotteries. It includes all incomes. You can gamble with 25 cents or thousand-dollar bills in most casinos. As long as you keep feeding the table or the video game, the casino is happy to allow you to escape into dreams of becoming rich.

e all experience frustrations from time to time. But where we turn for relief makes all the difference.

The problem starts when you begin "chasing" for the dollar due to gambling losses. You continue to gamble to get back what you have lost. Finding no peace or happiness when you are not gambling also forces you to do whatever you have to do to get back to the escape of the instant pleasure the gambling world offers.

It's easy to fall into the problems of lying, stealing, and not being responsible to your family and friends. Families of the gambler suffer because the gambler takes money that should go for family needs and other financial responsibilities. Your mind and energies have only one thought—how to get the next dollar you need in order to keep going. Like other addictions, gambling often leads to additional habits such as smoking and drinking to calm your nerves or suppress anxiety.

Never does one ultimately win at this game. Even fun-seeking "controlled gamblers" have found that when they do win big, rarely do they leave the casino with it. Those who own and run the gambling casinos know this. Gambling is a growing addiction that fills the mind with the idea: "If I can win once, I can win again." Gambling addicts often comfort themselves by thinking that when they win big they can help their family and others out of problems, but that time never comes. It's just a great gambling lie.

ever does one ultimately win at this game, but there is hope to break free from bondage.

Families suffer from gambling because the gambler takes money that should go for family needs and responsibilities.

Gambling is one of the hardest addictions of all to kick. There are few answers to curing this addiction. There is no substance from which to dry out, giving a person a break in which to make a new start. The only hope for this disease is to have a desire to quit that is stronger than life itself and a willingness to do anything it takes to align oneself with the power of God. Jesus alone has the answers to all our deepest grief, loneliness, unhappy memories, boredom, and insecurity which lead us into addictions in the first place.

Key Thought. Today God is doing everything He can to get our attention to teach us and help us become heaven's kind of people. God wants us to lay aside anything that takes away His openness and accessibility to us.

Gambling, whether it is betting in a casino or playing in a bingo hall, can take our time, energies, and thoughts away from the Lord as well as from our families. God doesn't want us to be addicted to anything on this earth. He wants us to be free to consistently choose to love and serve Him and let Him be the center of our lives.

Regarding the handling of the money God gives us, the Bible asks, "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:2–3).

Money can bless us or destroy us. Like a campfire it can warm or burn us.

BIBLE ANSWERS

1. What is God's plan for our physical, financial, and spiritual life? 3 John 2. "Beloved, I pray that you may _____ in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." *(All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)*

Note. It is God's desire that we should prosper financially and in every other way. However, we will only know happiness when we prosper with God's help in a balanced way. Money can bless us or destroy us. Like a campfire it can warm us or burn us.

2. Can observing the rich cause us to indulge in sinful envy? Psalm 73:1-3, 17-19. *Circle one:* (1) Yes. (2) No.

Note. Psalm 73 speaks of a selfish gain of money. Because of their money, some wealthy people feel no need of God, so He isn't able to help them. Their end is destruction. The "love of money" can destroy us eternally. (See 1 Timothy 6:10.)

Many people selfishly look for gain without working. God wants us to work for what we have. It is a character-building blessing to us (Proverbs 24:30-34). Gambling gives the idea to many people that they will never have to work again if they spend a little to strike it rich. True wealth, like true character development, knows no shortcuts and is not acquired by chance. It comes only through careful, hard work and wise management of our resources.

Many gamble in order to escape from their everyday problems. The problem is that they haven't learned to turn to the Source for help and solutions.

3. What is one of the underlying reasons why people gamble? 2 Timothy 3:1-5. "But know this . . . men will be . . . lovers of money. . . headstrong, haughty, lovers of _____ rather than lovers of God."

Note. Many people become selfish by indulging in pleasures to escape from the pain, heartbreak, loneliness, and anger which are a part of all of our lives. The problem is that they haven't learned to turn to the right Source for help and solutions to their problems and needs. To many, Christianity is just a form. They don't allow God to help them. Because they don't understand God's desire to help them, many gamble in order to escape from their everyday troubles. As a result, they go deeper into debt, despair, and sin.

4. How can the gambler find the solution to his or her addiction? Matthew 11:28-30. *(Circle one)* (1) Start saving money. (2) Stay away from casinos. (3) Turn to Jesus for help.

Note. If we will turn to Jesus with our problems of loneliness, boredom, and heartache, He has promised to hear us, come close to us, and give us power to overcome these problems. He will remove our inner restlessness. The Holy Spirit stands near us, wishing to comfort us and give us answers to our most tangled circumstances (Romans 15:13). The key is to open ourselves to Him and strive to simply stay close to Him. Healing, true joy, and peace will come to us when we do.

If we will turn to Jesus with our problems of loneliness and heartache, He will remove our inner restlessness.

5. What do Paul and Isaiah say about the peace God gives us when we turn to Him? Philippians 4:7; Isaiah 48:18. "The peace of God . . . will _____ your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "Oh, that you had heeded My _____! Then your peace would have been like a river."

Note. Peace is a rare possession on earth today. Few people have peace of heart and mind. But if we will turn to God, the Holy Spirit will draw close to us and give us

Few people have peace of heart and mind. The Creator offers true peace.

personal help. It gives us peace to know that we don't have to worry, because we can trust everything to the Creator's hands and control. One of the most wonderful descriptions of what happens to those who hold on to the Lord is found in Psalm 91.

6. Does it pay to ask God directly for help with our addictions and other problems? Psalm 107:19–20. "Then they _____ _____ to the Lord in their trouble, and He . . . delivered them from their _____." (Read also Psalm 107:28-31; 1 Peter 5:7.)

n addict can only be cured if he wants more than anything to be free from addiction's grip. We must align ourselves with the power of God.

Note. An addiction can only be cured if the addict wants more than anything in this world to be free from its grip. An addiction takes a person's focus off God and His power to help us. We can know victory and deliverance if we focus on Christ and cast on Him our every care. When we cry out to the Lord for help, He has promised to deliver us. At first we may have to reach out to Him every minute, but by doing so Jesus will give us victory over the addictions that hold us.

7. What does Jesus teach addicts and those with financial problems? Matthew 6:19-34. *Circle one:*
(1) He will take care of our needs.
(2) He will take away our worries.
(3) He will give us forgiveness and His righteousness.
(4) All three.

Note. There is only one way to find a solution to our problems of gambling, alcoholism, or drug abuse—focus on Jesus for help! We must realize we haven't the natural ability or strength to live a good life or escape from our addictions. When we make this choice to hold on to the Lord in our weakness, He is able to come to us through His Holy Spirit and rescue us. He will also send those who can help us and friends to stand by us. God will also help us search out professionals to help us. God can work hand in hand with good counselors. He will put into our minds strong reasons to stay away from addictions. He has a thousand ways to come to our aid. Addictions are complex psychological processes in the brain and often require professional help and intervention if they are to be overcome. But the key to help is recognizing our need and turning to God in faith and submission.

There is only one solution to problems of gambling, alcoholism, or drug abuse—focus on Jesus for help. He is the bondage-breaker.

In our own power we can be defeated, but turning our lives and problems over to Jesus allows the Creator's power to bring victory and peace of mind. "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation" (Psalm 118:14).

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Remember, many people have found victory in dependence upon God for strength and seeking a professional Christian counselor. Victory can be yours too!

Next Lesson. Prospering in Health. One of the greatest lessons in life is taught by our elders who understand how short life really is. There is an old saying, "If I had known how short life is, I would have taken better care of myself." The Lord wants us to prosper in health, and He has given us some definite guidelines, which, if followed, guarantee us a happier, healthier lifestyle.

Native New Day
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DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY: ED GUTHERO **DESIGN:** MICHELLE C. PETZ
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Deliverance from Compulsive Addictions

Read through the lesson, then fill in this Answer Sheet. You should refer back to the lesson to find the correct answers. Referring to the lesson helps fix the answers in your mind.

Place an X before each TRUE statement.

1. God wants us to:

☐ learn to trust Him by experiencing poverty.

☐ prosper financially and be in good health.

2. The love of money can destroy people spiritually:

☐ because it makes them feel no need of God.

☐ because they praise God too much for His blessings.

3. Many people turn to gambling:

☐ in order to have money to use in blessing others.

☐ because they haven't learned that only the power of Jesus can bring deliverance from the problems in their lives.

4. A person can conquer the addiction of gambling:

☐ only by turning to Jesus for the power to overcome it.

☐ by slowly tapering off and gambling less and less often.

5. When we turn to God, He will give us:

☐ the "peace" of knowing we can trust everything to our Creator's control and His eternal plan.

☐ the "peace" of knowing that as Christians we do not need to obey His commandments.

6. God gives us deliverance and victory over our addictions:

☐ when we come to the Lord and ask Him to help us.

☐ when we try our best to overcome our addictions without God's help.

7. We can overcome our addictions by:

☐ looking to Jesus for help.

☐ asking our friends to help us instead of Jesus.

Answer to a question often asked about compulsion and addiction.

Can a person controlled by, or struggling with, bad addicitons—such as alcoholism or drugs—overcome these problems?

- All of us, Christians and non-Christians, struggle with bad habits of some kind.

It may even be an addiction to gossip, criticism, anger, or selfishness. Because of the weak and sinful nature we are born with, we will always be learning and growing. But the good news of the gospel is that we can gain "the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57) and He can "keep you from stumbling" (Jude 24). The key to successfully developing a godly character is to cooperate with our Creator by allowing Him to make changes in us. Because of the sinfulness of this world we live in, God tells us to "lay aside" everything that entangles us and hinders us from living a righteous and godly lifestyle by fixing our eyes on Jesus, asking for His help, and following His example (Hebrews 12:1-2). This is the work of a lifetime.

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1. Read each lesson, and fill in each Answer Sheet.

2. Additional Native New Day Bible Lessons will be sent/given to you as we receive your filled-in Answer Sheets.

3. If someone gave these lessons to you personally then return to that person the filled-in Answer Sheet. If the lessons were mailed to you, then follow these instructions:

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   b. If you have had a change of address, please draw a single line through your old address and write your new address below the box.

   c. Send the Answer Sheets in the envelope that is provided or use another envelope.

   d. We will return your corrected Answer Sheets and send additional lessons to you.

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