

## **Problem Gamblers Frequently:**

- Have a desire to increase the amount of their bets
- Are restless or irritable while trying to cut back
- Gamble with increasing frequency and amounts of money
- Spend an excessive amount of time gambling at the expense of job or family time
- Become preoccupied with gambling or with obtaining money for gambling
- Feel an aroused sense of 'being in action' while gambling.
- Use gambling as an escape mechanism
- Continue to gamble despite negative consequences, such as large losses and work or family problems
- Borrow money to gamble, taking out secret loans or maximising credit cards
- Brag about wins but forget to tell about losses.
- Have frequent mood swings - higher when winning, lower when losing
- Gamble for longer periods of time or for more money than originally planned
- Engage in secretive behaviour such as hiding betting slips or receipts, and having post or bills sent to another address.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Compulsive gambling. *Psychology Today* 2002 Oct 10

## **Help for the Gambler**

As with other addictions, the first step toward help for the pathological gambler is recognising that there is a problem. The following are some steps that you - or someone you know - can take to address the challenge of compulsive gambling.

- ✓ Identify the 'triggers' that make you want to gamble. Practice new, constructive thinking patterns or activities that help you avoid those triggers
- ✓ Join a gamblers' support group
- ✓ Realise that total abstinence is the only cure for the gambling addict
- ✓ Ask your doctor about any medical intervention that may be appropriate
- ✓ When you are tempted to gamble, remember that the impulse will pass
- ✓ Avoid being around others who gamble
- ✓ Spend time with people who will encourage you in positive pursuits
- ✓ Find someone to talk to about your desire to quit gambling, or consider counselling
- ✓ Ask God to help you overcome the habit and engage in new, rewarding activities
- ✓ Remember that changing your actions helps to change the way your brain works - it will get easier. Even the most tenacious addictions can be overcome.

The best way to avoid developing a problem with gambling is not to gamble at all. The Bible teaches very plainly that the mind-set of easy gain that gambling encourages is contrary to sound principles of life and mental health. While there is honour in living and even increasing wealth, we are warned of the folly of trusting in riches for true happiness and security: "Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly; away as an eagle toward heaven."<sup>1</sup> We are warned that feeding an obsession for gain is a potent source of misery: "He whose desires are fixed on profit is a cause of trouble to his family: but he who has no desire for offerings will have life."<sup>2</sup> In place of empty cravings and unsatisfying temporary wins, God promises us the "durable riches"<sup>3</sup> of self-control;<sup>4</sup> a balanced life;<sup>5</sup> wisdom, knowledge and joy, salvation from the bondage of bad habits;<sup>7</sup> and, at last, a beautiful tax-free mansion in heaven.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Proverbs 23:5; <sup>2</sup>Proverbs 15:27; <sup>3</sup>Proverbs 8:18; <sup>4</sup>Galatians 5:22-23; <sup>5</sup>1Timothy 1:7; <sup>6</sup>Ecclesiastes 2:26;

<sup>7</sup>John 8:36; <sup>8</sup>John 14:2.