

## TRAINING

# Step Out of a Gambling Addiction



*Are you or do you know someone entangled in a gambling addiction? Luke Tan discusses how to get out of it.*

I was contemplating the topic of gambling when a headline in The Straits Times caught my attention: “Record \$1.9 billion prize spark rush in US for lottery tickets”. The photo accompanying the article showed people waiting in line to purchase tickets for the Powerball lottery in San Bernardino, California.

The odds of winning are just one in 292 million. Nevertheless many Americans, even those who normally shun lotteries joined the queue at retail stores across the country.

Another headline in the Chinese newspaper Lianhe Wanbao reported that the Chinese New Year Toto draw would take place on February 19. Singapore Pools has raised the prize money from \$10 million to \$12 million for this ‘Hong Bao’ Toto Draw. This huge prize is a motivation for many to pit their chances against millions of punters.

The desire of man to become instant millionaires and retire wealthy exists in every society. In a typical week in Singapore, one can indulge in some form of gambling. With the establishment of casinos and online betting, gambling has become normalized and glamorized in our society.

I am part of a WhatsApp chat group comprising old friends from my army days. One of the common subjects is lottery. Someone would usually suggest pooling of resources and randomly put a few numbers together. There is never any lack of investors. The investment is small and the return is high, though elusive. Ironically the one who advocates this venture professes to be a Christian. His mantra is: “No buy, No chance; Got buy, Got chance”. He would talk people into joining by talking of the possibility of a good life – unceasing

vacations and retirement. Their venture always comes to nothing.

People indulge in gambling because of the perception that it is the quickest way to acquire wealth. Nothing can be further from the truth. Gambling is a dangerous activity.

A clear sign of a gambling addict is greed. Greed encourages incalculable risk-taking. It robs us of productivity and cultivates negative addictive behaviors.

The way to overcome greed is contentment, to be happy with what we have. God’s Word reminds us that godliness with contentment is great gain.

The best form of prevention is abstinence. Stay away from the desire to pursue any get-rich-quick schemes. The proverbial saying, “If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is” deserves our careful attention. Do not be lured by exaggerated profits and ludicrous returns without effort. Heed the warning and stay away from temptation.

Greed elevates oneself towards the love of money. There is the perpetual feeling that whatever you have is not enough and you’ll need to seek more. The warning from Scripture is clear. “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

Do you know of someone addicted to this insatiable habit, even if it’s something as simple as buying lottery? How can you identify and help them to be free from this blazing fire that never says ‘enough’? (Proverbs 30:15-16)

### ACKNOWLEDGE

The first thing the addict needs to do is to acknowledge that he has a problem. Once a person has indulged in gambling, it is hard to walk away. It is especially so when his losses mount up and he feels compelled to recoup his lost investment.

Addictive gambling will affect your quality of life. It leads one down a path of destruction, such as borrowing, pawning and selling their possessions, or even stealing and robbing when situation become desperate. It is a spiral ride down a hellhole.

Pride keeps people from acknowledging their problems. A proud person is like a person who has bad breath. Everyone around him knows it except himself. Do not be in denial. Be humble and seek help if you are addicted to gambling.

### ACTION

Be willing to make all the necessary adjustments. Speak to someone, your spouse, a family member, a friend or

call the helpline of a centre that provides counseling.

Initiate a self-exclusion order to the casino. Discipline yourself to avoid places of temptation.

Overcoming addiction is spiritual warfare. Pray and submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew (26:41)

Your part in this spiritual battle is to yield yourself to God and resist the enemy whose mission is to steal, to kill and to destroy. “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

### ACQUIRE

Habit is hard to kick. Remove the ‘H’, you have ‘ABIT’. Remove the ‘A’, you have ‘BIT’. Remove the ‘B’, there is still ‘IT’. You become an overcomer when you persevere till the very end. Acquire and develop meaningful activities to enrich your life. Build a relationship with God through prayer and His Word. (Psalm 119:9-11)

The power of God can set you free. A lady was set free from gambling addiction. There was not a day where she did not patronize betting outlets. She lost lots of money and the habit took a toll on her marriage. In desperation, she let go and let God take control. Miraculously the chain that bound her for years was broken instantaneously. She was set free and no longer possesses an urge to gamble. You can experience the freedom too, if you believe.

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)



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