

## **Are you Helping or Hurting?**

### **PAIN CAN MOTIVATE CHANGE**

Many godly parents have prayed and fasted for their child or a loved one, yet they watch painfully as the person continues down a path of rebellion and destruction. One mother said, "I pray for my children, but why is God so slow to answer?" So, what can parents or grandparents do to help their loved ones? For many, the key is to stop enabling the behavior of their loved one by continually rescuing them from the consequences of their actions. Once the loved one begins to feel the pain, they are creating through drug abuse or other destructive behavior, the path to health and wholeness can emerge as an alternative to the path of destruction.

### **ARE YOU AN ENABLER? TAKE THIS TEST:**

1. Works for self-improvement:" If I were a better parent/grandparent/friend, my loved one wouldn't be doing this."
2. Changes the environment to accommodate the person with the problem:" Let's change schools and get our child away from those troublemakers."
3. Takes on the whole world in defense of a loved one:" The whole legal system is corrupt, and my child/grandchild/friend is getting unjust treatment."
4. Their pain increases. Because the loved one is still acting irresponsibly, the enabler's pain and frustration deepens.
5. Communication deteriorates. Because the issues are unresolved, defenses are high. Both the enabler and the loved one are often deluded about reality.
6. Enabling is habit-forming. The enabler keeps offering the same kind of help. Sometimes the enabler derives such deep satisfaction from "rescuing" someone that he or she never assesses whether the assistance is helping or hurting the loved one.

### **ENABLING – OFFERING THE WRONG KIND OF HELP**

Enabling is rescuing your loved ones so that they do not experience the painful consequences of their irresponsible decisions. Enabling is anything that stands in the way of persons experiencing the natural consequences of their own behavior. Tracy, the young mother of two boys, has mastered the art of manipulating her family into enabling her behavior. Often arrested on drug charges, she would say to her parents, "Do you want to see the mother of your grandchildren locked up in jail?" The last time it happened, the parents were planning to mortgage their home so they could afford the bail payment.

Galatians 6:7-8 speaks to Christians about this with a simple but blunt truth. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from that Spirit will reap eternal life."(NIV) Bad actions have painful

consequences, even when our children or loved ones are involved. Thankfully, God can use those consequences for His purposes if we don't get in His way.

When you stop enabling, get ready for more trouble. When you stop offering the wrong kind of help, your loved ones may get very angry with you – and for a “good” reason. You've stopped rescuing them. Now they are beginning to feel the painful consequences of their irresponsible decisions. Just before mortgaging their home, Tracy's parents were persuaded to stop enabling her. They let her stay in jail for almost a year, feeling the full impact of her irresponsible behavior. Angry and frustrated, Tracy accused them of not loving her. But while she was in jail, the drugs cleared out of Tracy's system and she began to think clearly again. She joined a Bible study, became a Christian and entered Teen Challenge when she was released.

When you decide to stop enabling, like Tracy's parents did, you must stand on the facts, especially if you have a tender heart. You must continue to rehearse the fact of how your loved one's actions are destroying his or her life and how enabling this to continue is the worst thing you could do.

God is a loving Father, don't be afraid to trust Him. When you stop enabling your loved one, he or she may go further down the path of destruction. You may inwardly think, “I can't bear to see my daughter in such pain and danger.” Or, “My son might get killed! And then I would have his death on my hands. I can't let that happen!”

But whatever happens, do not be afraid to trust God. Place your hope in the story of the Prodigal Son recorded in Luke 15. This father did not enable his son. He allowed him to leave home, knowing the son would soon waste his inheritance. Before long, the rebellious young man had lost everything, and he ended up in a pig pen eating the food the pigs didn't want.

But all alone in the pig pen, the Bible says, “He came to his senses.” The young man realized that even the hired men at his father's household ate better than he did. And the son resolved to go and seek his father's forgiveness. When he finally meets his father again, the son's true repentance is seen in his words: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.” (Verse 21) He takes personal responsibility for his actions. It's time for joyful peace and a celebration.

Learning to be at peace with God. Just like the Prodigal Son's father, you can rest in the peace that God has the address of your loved ones, no matter how deep they are in sin. His love far surpasses your love. He knows what will work best to bring your loved ones to that point of change. You've got to trust God even when things are going from bad to worse. Stop offering the wrong kind of help. Stop feeding the problem. Stop being deceived. Trust Him. Jesus is ready to help us offer the right kind of help. He promises to give us wisdom to make the difficult decisions. He also stands ready and waiting with open arms to help our loved ones who really need His help. Look to Him today for guidance on how best to help those you love.