

Drugs and alcohol / Resisting temptation

Storyteller: Paulus was home on holidays from university in the city. Paulus and his brother Timothy went down to the river. It was a cloudy day, good for fishing. They set up their fishing poles, and threw the hooks out into the middle of the river. Ah! It was just like when they were younger.... waiting for fish to bite, and telling each other long stories. But it nearly turned out so differently.

Tammy: Hello, my friend. Welcome to Women of Hope today. I'm Tammy ...

Carol: ...and I'm Carol. I know what it's like to have children grow up and leave home to study. Do you? Do you wish you could still watch over them while they're away?

Tammy: Today we have a story about what happened to one young man in the city. Let's listen together.

Storyteller: They watched the river for a while, then Paulus said, "Not everything that happened in the city was good, although I haven't told our parents that." Timothy looked confused. "What happened?" he asked. Paulus answered, "When I went to university, I was just a country boy. I wanted to try everything new. I did make new friends and I was very busy with my studies, but I missed the family. I was terribly lonely there." Paulus looked down. "I had told two of my new friends that I was homesick sometimes. So one day, they came to my room in the boarding house. 'We've got something that will make you feel great,' they said.

One of them took out some brown, dried leaves from a bag and made something that looked like a cigarette, then he lit it. I tried it, copying what he had done. I took two sucks, and then gave it back to them, and they took it in turns to smoke it.

Almost immediately, I felt very calm and had a strange feeling of happiness. Everything I did just felt better.... music sounded better, food tasted better, everything felt better. The brown stuff was marijuana and it seemed wonderful! My friends gave me a few marijuana cigarettes for later.

The next afternoon, when I came home after lectures, I put on the radio for some music, sat down and enjoyed some more of the marijuana. My, it was good! Suddenly, I saw that it was after 10 o'clock at night, and I hadn't opened any of my books or notes yet! I hadn't even started the work I had to have ready for the next day!

Two days later, the marijuana was all gone, and I was feeling sad and lonely again. I found the sellers and bought a small amount of marijuana from them. I kept doing that for about two months. Every afternoon when I came back from lectures, I would smoke one... or more... and everything felt better.”

Timothy listened intently to everything his brother was saying, surprised by his brother's story.

“Yes,” continued Paul, “I felt happier, and calm, like I was floating around in a happy cloud. And I really enjoyed my food and my music. But that was the trap! I was only thinking about *myself* and making *myself* happy and making *myself* enjoy things, and making *myself* comfortable, and *making* myself forget *my* problems. So that meant that I got angry with anyone who didn't do what *I* wanted. I began to get into fights, and I didn't care what other people thought or how *they* felt. I was only thinking about myself...all the time.

I wasted a *lot* of time...many, many hours. And I was having trouble remembering anything from my lectures. Sometimes I could read a whole chapter of a textbook and not remember anything I'd read!

But you know, I didn't care! I didn't care if I did my studies well or not. I didn't even care if I passed my exams or not. I didn't care if I failed, I didn't care if my room was a mess, I didn't care if my clothes were dirty ...in fact, I started looking dreadful and I didn't do anything about it. Then one day, I was called to the principal's office and my lecturers told me I had to change my behavior if I wanted to stay at the university.

That was bad enough, but there was something worse. Our parents worked hard to get money; they sent it to me so I could live and study. Sometimes I didn't buy food ...I used the money to buy marijuana. And I felt bad that I was using father's money just to make me feel good. He thought I was studying hard and would get a degree and he would be proud of me. But here I was, failing in my studies and getting sick because I was using his money to buy marijuana! Of course my friends kept inviting me to join them in smoking. I really wanted to have friends at university, so it was difficult for me to say 'No'."

Timothy asked, "Did you have a girlfriend?"

Paul's face was suddenly serious. Timothy thought he would cry. Then he opened his wallet and pulled out a photo of a girl with lovely bright eyes.

Timothy took the photo. "Wow! She's pretty!", he said. "What's her name?"

"Melody," answered Paul. "Yes, she *was* pretty. She was *sweet, intelligent...* a hard worker and just a *beautiful* person. But she's dead."

"What?" asked Timothy, very surprised. "What happened?"

Paul said sadly, "It's an awful story. She was in one of my classes, and we always studied together. Aah! She was fantastic! Soon we were good friends. But with the

marijuana, I didn't care at all about other people. It was all about me... always me. I would get angry with people over little things.

So one day, when Melody asked me for help with some little thing, I answered her roughly and didn't feel sorry about it. She cried in big sobs; she told me that I had changed so much and become a selfish, horrible person. I suddenly realised that I *had* changed, and I certainly didn't like the person I had become! I was horrible!

At that moment, I decided that I would never smoke marijuana again. I told God how sorry I was, and I asked God to give me the strength to stop. It was hard at first, but with God's help I did it. I've learned that marijuana *does* damage your brain and it changes how you *think* and *feel* and how you *act*. So I thank God that I only used it for about two months! And when Melody saw that I didn't use marijuana any more, she forgave me and we became good friends again."

"Wow! That's incredible! But then what happened?" asked Timothy.

Paul answered sadly, "Melody went to a party one night. They were dancing to the music for a while, but it was very loud and she got a headache. One of her friends gave her a pill to take. He said it would cure her headache. She thought it looked different from the usual headache tablet, but she swallowed it anyway and sat down while she waited for it to work. Soon, though, she said she felt strange, like she was in a panic and hot, and then she fainted. Her friends were only thinking about having fun at the party, and they thought she'd fallen asleep, so they left her lying alone there.

Later, when they wanted to go home, they shook Melody, but she wouldn't wake up. When they took a closer look at her, they saw that she was dead! The pill that she'd been given was not a headache pill at all, but something called 'ecstasy'. It speeds everything up in your body, and makes your body get very hot inside. When the brain gets way too hot, you can die."

Timothy was horrified! “Poor Melody! That’s terrible!” He sat quietly, looking at the photo, and tried to imagine how bad his brother had felt to lose his girlfriend in that way.

Tammy: You’re with Women of Hope, and we’re hearing about how Paulus went to the city and started to use drugs.

Carol: Isn’t this a sad story? Melody died after being given just one ecstasy pill. And Paulus nearly failed his studies because he was using marijuana. Let’s hear what else Paulus said to his brother...

Storyteller: Paulus continued, “There are many drugs that people use to get rid of feelings when they’re sad...or frustrated...or bored...or they feel empty. Or perhaps they just want to feel good all the time.”

Timothy asked, “Isn’t that stuff against the law?”

“Yes”, said Paulus, “it is! Health experts have shown that all these drugs damage our bodies or our brains in one way or another. Governments all over the world make laws against drugs and police arrest anyone selling them. The drug I tried was marijuana, a type of leaf that’s dried and smoked like tobacco. But there’s another type of drug...a powder that you sniff up your nose. It’s really expensive, and can damage your brain in a very short time. People who use it become addicted to it very quickly. They can’t stop using it without dreadful things happening to their body. They’ll do anything to get it! It’s really dangerous!

There are other drugs that are liquid, that you inject directly into your blood vessels. Those drugs are also very expensive...and damage your brain badly. You can’t stop using them once you start. And if the needle has been used before *you* use it, you

can get AIDS and other diseases from it. Other people sniff glue or petrol; they're cheap, but they really damage people's brains too."

Timothy had a question. "But Paulus, why is that any different from someone getting drunk on beer or wine? That costs money, too, and when people are drunk they're only thinking about feeling good. They don't care that they yell and fight and do stupid things. And they don't think about how they're damaging their body...or causing danger to others if they drive on the roads."

"True," answered Paulus. "You're right. Alcohol is the same as any other drug in those ways. It's just that you don't get addicted to alcohol as quickly as you do with the other drugs. But it certainly does damage your body and your brain. It can ruin your life and your family's life. How many families are miserable because the husband or wife drinks too much? They waste the family's money and neglect the work they should be doing. Often they swear at the children and hit them. How many friends have become enemies because they got drunk and argued about something? And how many people have got AIDS and don't even remember who they had sex with? How many people have died in car accidents because a driver was drunk? Yes, I agree with you...alcohol is a drug as bad as any other."

Timothy looked puzzled. "I don't understand. Why would anyone *want* to use those things? Even if they feel sad, they'd be totally crazy to go anywhere near that stuff!"

Paulus didn't answer immediately. Then he spoke sadly, "The problem is that many people have no *meaning* to their life...they have no peace with God. So if they're desperate to feel good and to forget that their lives are empty, they will often try drugs. I was like that once. But now my life isn't empty, since I started to follow Jesus Christ. That's how I got strong enough to stop using marijuana.

Timothy, when you go to the city for university later, don't be stupid like me, huh? If someone offers you drugs of *any* sort, just say "*No!*" You can make *good* friends,

who won't try to give you drugs or alcohol. And if you're feeling lonely and sad, you can always go to God for help. When I remember that he loves me and is *always* with me wherever I am, then I don't miss home so much. And when I think about other people and try to help them, I don't feel so lonely."

Timothy looked into his brother's face. "Thank you for telling me about what happened, Paulus. I hope I don't make those mistakes - and I'm so happy you've become so strong. You're a great brother!"

Tammy: Here on Women of Hope, Paulus was talking about drugs. He said alcohol is a dangerous drug too - did you ever think of it like that? The Bible was written before many drugs were discovered, but alcohol has been around for almost as long as people have. It's our oldest drug, and God's word talks about it often. The Bible warns us about getting drunk - and I'm sure that means other drugs too. Let me read you some of the Proverbs written thousands of years ago. This is what a wise man said to his son.

'Wine is a mocker and strong drink a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.' (Prov 20:1)

Carol: It's like the alcohol laughs at you and gets you into fights, and you're silly to let a drink trick you into doing bad things.

Tammy: Here's some more from God's book of Proverbs (23:29-35). Listen:

'Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has bruises and bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who love mixed wine. Don't look at that red wine sparkling in the cup, even though it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a snake! You'll see strange sights, you won't be able to think or speak clearly. You'll feel as though you were seasick, tossing about in the rigging of a ship in the ocean. "I must have been hit" you'll say, "but I don't remember. Why can't I wake up? I need another drink!"'

Carol: What a picture of a person with a hangover...the morning after he's been drunk! It sounds funny, but it's not; it's tragic, because this person has lost control of himself. God wants us to be responsible for our thoughts and actions, to do the right things. Drugs and alcohol make people do bad things, we all know that. God's word warns us not to do anything that makes us lose self-control.

But how can we resist temptation? ...We need to turn to God for help, and keep our eyes on *him*. Remember that he loves us and wants the best for us, and drugs and alcohol are *not* the best for us.

There's a promise in the Bible for you. 'God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are tempted he will give you the strength to (resist) it, and so provide you with a way out.' (1 Corinthians 10:13)

When you're tempted, ask God to show you the way out! And stay away from places where you'll be tempted, and from people who will give you these things - they're not *true* friends.

Tammy: Paulus talked about why people start to use drugs. What do you think? He said that often it's because people have empty lives. I know people who use alcohol to feel more confident, and others who use drugs to cover up how anxious they feel, or to forget the painful things in their lives. And I was thinking, we all have our own difficulties and look for ways to feel better. What do *you* do to feel better?

Carol: That's a good question Tammy. I should ask myself what *I* do to feel satisfied in life. What makes *me* feel good about myself? I know now that I feel most happy, and confident, and satisfied when I stay close to God... when I remember his love and let him guide my life. He makes me much happier than alcohol ever could!

There's some good advice in God's word; it says, 'Don't get drunk with wine, which will only ruin you; instead, be filled with God's Holy Spirit. Speak to each other with the words of psalms and spiritual songs. Make music to the Lord in your hearts. In

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, always give thanks for everything to God the Father.' (Eph 5:18-20)

Tammy: What great words from the Bible! If you're thankful, and let God's Spirit guide your life, you will feel more joyful and satisfied, even if things are difficult. You won't need drugs and alcohol to get you through.

Carol: My friend, if you have become addicted to alcohol or other drugs, I want to tell you that it's not too late to change. Ask God for help, and find true friends who will help you. You could go to your health worker and ask for medical help to get through the difficult times when you desperately want the drugs. It will be hard, but many people have done it. You'll be so glad when you do. There *is* hope. Why don't you start now to plan for a different life?

Tammy: It's time to say goodbye. We've heard some important things today, and I hope that we'll all think more about them, and decide to live good lives, with God's help. You can write to us and tell us how we can pray for you....

Carol: Goodbye, and let's get together again next time. God bless you!

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