



**“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Proverbs 15:27).**

## **Gambling**

**Central Truth:** Gambling violates Bible principles for personal livelihood.

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The gambling interests are continually at work to get their wagering legalized in all parts of the country. It matters not whether the betting is on horse races or dog races, athletic games, lottery, casinos, or other issues. The goal is to get society to accept gambling and to get the law to protect their efforts to make money by preying on the gullibility of people who want to get rich without work.

The gambling interests are deceptive. They speak of legalizing horse racing, for instance. There is no law that makes horse racing illegal. Their desire is to legalize gambling on horse races, not to legalize racing itself.

The gambling interests promise “easy money,” “painless taxes,” or “instant prosperity.” The news media reports when one person wins the lottery; it does not report on the thousands who lost. Gambling is made to appear as a harmless way to make money without working for it.

What should be the Christian's attitude toward gambling? Can a Christian support by silence, by approval, or by vote?

## **Definition of Gambling**

Gambling is taking an artificial risk in the hope of excessive gain beyond the investment of time, money, or skill, in which one person's gain is at another person's loss. It is promoted by a desire to gain a profit for oneself, even if it hurts someone else. It is selfish and non-productive to the

general welfare of society.

Is insurance a form of gambling? No. Gambling creates change; insurance is protection against the unpredictable. The gambler takes from others for his win. The person who invests in insurance bears the burden of those who suffer loss and are paid by the company. Gambling and insurance are opposites. Is investing in the stock market a form of gambling? No. An element of risk is involved in such investments, it is true. However, it is an investment in businesses which provide goods and or services for the benefit of society. The investor hopes to make a reasonable profit because other people benefit. That same principle applies to business investments of any kind. On the other hand, the gambler hopes to make a profit because others lose.

What are the elements of gambling, according to our definition? (1) There is an artificial risk, created at one's own choosing. (2) There is a selfish goal to get personal profit at the loss of the investment of others, not to serve human need. (3) There is no productive by-product that results and no social benefits are accomplished. (4) There is one person's gain at many others' loss.

Should Christians be involved in the gambling industry? No. They should not vote for it, work as employees in it, or participate in games of chance which it offers.

## **Taxes and Gambling**

Those who promote gambling, in whatever form, stress how much money can be raised to relieve the tax burdens of citizens of the state. They picture schools amply supplied with funds and the elderly greatly benefited by the increased revenue to the state. Those claims are false.

After Atlantic City, New Jersey, legalized casino gambling, real estate prices increased until the poor and aged had their rents doubled, tripled, and even quadrupled. Many were forced to move out of their homes because they could not pay the rent. (That report was given by Mayor Joseph Lazarow and reported in Parade magazine, June, 1979.) Gambling brought no aid to those elderly citizens; it brought tragedy instead.

The State of Texas legalized gambling by lottery, with great promises by promoters that the public school system would profit greatly. Two years later the schools are still in a financial squeeze and the promised revenue is nowhere to be seen.

The tax dollars gained by gambling are the most expensive dollars government can collect. It costs five cents to collect a tax dollar, but six

cents to collect a lottery dollar. Commonly, less than 2 percent of any state's budget comes from taxes on gambling. Every objective study made has concluded that gambling produces very little revenue; instead it raises money from the wrong people (the poor) in the wrong way.

Herbert Jenkins, former president of the International Association of Police Chiefs, said, "For every tax dollar received in gambling taxes, government spends ten dollars fighting problems directly related to legalized gambling: prostitution, embezzlement, bad checks, and police corruption. Racketeers and mobsters swarm to gambling communities and bring with them other sordid businesses" (from "Legalized Gambling," an article by J. B. Buffington, in *The Sword of the Lord*). What a poor way to raise money!

## **Crime and Gambling**

Legalized gambling creates more gamblers in a society, many of whom are addicted to gambling. Those who begin to wager legally often switch to illegal games of chance as their addiction grows.

Police corruption is a major problem in areas where gambling is legalized. It is reported that one half of the income from gambling interests is paid to the police for "protection."

Nevada is considered the "gambling capital" of the nation. Its per-capita crime rate is double, and the suicide rate is triple, the national average. It has the highest crime rate of any state in the nation. Reno has the highest crime rate of any city in the United States in proportion to size. In all states with legalized gambling, the crime rate is twice as big as in non-legalized gambling states.

Legalizing gambling does not decrease crime. It increases it in the form of robbery, pornography, prostitution, drugs, loan-sharking, and con games. It even increases illegal gambling.

## **Social Effects of Gambling**

Gambling, whether legal or illegal, destroys society. It swells the welfare rolls as money is spent on gambling that should provide food and clothing to poorer families. It does not promote tourism. (A study in Florida reported that 80 percent of the gambling in that state was by residents there.) Add to that the problem of unpaid bills, embezzlement, bankruptcy, and absenteeism from jobs when gambling is legalized. Bad debts increased by 20 percent in Britain after "betting shops" were legalized. A department store in Los Angeles reported that payments fell off by as much as 30

percent because of gambling.

Gambling destroys families. Innocent people, sometimes children, suffer because family income is gambled away. The something-for-nothing crave which gambling promotes will undermine character and destroy a home.

## **The Bible and Gambling**

There is no verse in the Bible which commands, “Thou shalt not gamble.” But the Bible is set against the practice, whether it is legal or illegal wagering. Consider this Bible teaching.

**People are to work, providing goods or services that meet human need, for their livelihood.** God told Adam, *“In the sweat of thy face”* [which means productive labor] *“shalt thou eat bread”* (Genesis 3:19). The fifth of the Ten Commandments has two parts: first, *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”*; second, *“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work”* (Exodus 20:8, 9). The second part is as much a commandment as the first. Paul wrote to Christians, *“Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands”* (I Thessalonians 4:11). In fact, one who fails to engage in productive labor so as to produce a livelihood has no right to expect others to provide for him: *“Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”* (II Thessalonians 3:10). It is evident that God intends for a person to work for his living.

**Covetousness, which is the primary motive behind gambling, is condemned in the Bible.** Woe to the one whose desire for wealth makes him dissatisfied with the fruits of his own labor. *“He coveteth greedily all the day long”* (Proverbs 21:26) and comes under the condemnation of God.

God warns, *“Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!”* (Habakkuk 2:9). It is evident that God condemns any desire for increase that is intended solely for the pleasure of the person who covets.

All covetousness, whether or not it is related to gambling, is condemned of God. It is called “idolatry” in Colossians 3:5. God hates it; so it must be hated by the people of God.

**True riches are not material but spiritual, according to the Bible.** Jesus taught, *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Luke 12:15). He illustrated that truth by telling of a man who had so much money

he could live for years without added income, yet had no true wealth at all. *“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (Luke 12:21).

*“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. . . .By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life”* (Proverbs 22:1, 4).

**People should set their hearts to seek God rather than earthly wealth.** Blessed is any person or any nation *“whose God is the LORD”* (Psalm 33:12). It is better to be under *“the eye of the LORD”* and receive His care than to be left to one's own devices to provide for himself (Psalm 33,18-22).

**There are great dangers which accompany wealth, according to the Bible.** Those dangers accompany wealth from any source (Deuteronomy 8:7-20), but especially that received by ill-gotten means (James 5:1-6).

As a Christian, you have a higher calling toward work and wealth. You must commit your life to serving the best interests of others as you labor for your livelihood. Produce quality goods or render faithful service for the money you receive. Live under the principles of moral and ethical purity as taught in Holy Scripture. Here is the principle: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3:1-3).

## Questions for Discussion

1. How would you define gambling?
2. Why do gambling interests work so hard to get it legalized?
3. Why are business investments not a form of gambling?
4. How does gambling fail in its promise of tax revenues?
5. Why does crime increase in areas where gambling is legal?
6. How does gambling destroy family life for many?
7. How does the Bible say you are to get your income?
8. Why does the Bible condemn covetousness, which is the root of gambling?
9. How does Deuteronomy 8:18 relate to this study on gambling?
10. How does Colossians 3:1-3 fortify you against gambling?