

# GAMBLING: CONSENSUAL THEFT!

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## INTRODUCTION:

- A. A story or two about the impact of gambling ([http://www.oagaa.org/html/horror\\_stories.htm](http://www.oagaa.org/html/horror_stories.htm))
- B. Gambling is a REAL problem! However, in our culture it has become more and more of an accepted activity. To many it has become just another form of recreation! But what does God's word say?

## I. GAMBLING AND THE CHRISTIAN:

### A. Gambling is problem that is clearly recognized by our society:

1. 2004 in the U.S. – 700 Billion was spent on LEGALIZED gambling (This does not include illegal gambling and small bets)... It is one of the fastest growing industries in this country!
2. There are over 795 casinos in the U.S. - Australia has 13, Canada has 60, England has 60, France has 50, Germany has 50, Central America has 62, & all of the continent of Africa has only 117
3. More money is spent on gambling in the US than on Medicare & Medicaid combined! More gambled than went to the movies! Americans spend more gambling than on groceries!
4. Evidence proves that problem or pathological gambling is directly linked to other social problems like divorce, child abuse, domestic violence, bankruptcy, crime and suicide. It is estimated that 15.4 million adults and adolescences meet the criteria of these disorders.

### B. Let's take a moment to make sure we really understand what gambling is

1. Some don't see anything wrong with gambling because all Christians take risks in various things:
  - a. Some might see buying and selling stock as the same thing, purchasing life insurance policies, or starting a business as gambling – Some argue that driving is gambling!
  - b. There are many things in life we can participate in which involves some degree of risk; however, just because there is risk there doesn't mean we are gambling!
  - c. Sometimes our words cause this confusion – For example... A person planting flowers may say, "I am going to take a gamble on the fact that it won't frost again this year"
2. Others justify gambling because they amount they are gambling is really insignificant:
  - a. Some would readily condemn the addicted gambler whose bills go unpaid and family is not cared for but have no problem with the recreational gambler who controls himself
  - b. Whether it's 50 cents in a slot machine or 500 dollars lost playing poker... what defines the activity as gambling would still be present (Like telling small lies or big lies... still lies)
  - c. Listen to how Gambler's Anonymous defines gambling: "Any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or "skill" constitutes gambling"
3. To help us understand what gambling really is, let's consider how various experts define it:
  - a. American Heritage: "To bet money on the outcome of a game, contest, or other event"
  - b. World Book Encyclopedia: "Gambling is betting on the outcome of a future event.  
Gamblers usually bet money or something else of value as a stake on the outcome they predict. When the outcome is settled, the winner collects the loser's stakes."
4. As we consider those definitions there are three characteristics that make something gambling:
  - a. There is an uncertain event: That is, there is the outcome of an event or activity that has not been determined which people are placing wagers on (like the winner of a race)
  - b. There is a bet placed: Money, property, or valuables are placed as stakes with the chance

- to be increased or lost when the outcome the gambler bets on is determined
  - c. There is a winner & a loser: This could be one person or a group of people. The winner(s) collect the money, valuables, or property which the loser bet
5. Gambling can come in many forms – Betting on a horse race, playing slot machines, betting on sporting events (fantasy sports even), betting on a card game, buying lottery tickets, playing bingo where stakes are placed to play, or even buying raffle tickets – all fit the definition!

## **II. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES THAT CONDEMN GAMBLING:**

### **A . Some Christians feel justified in gambling because the Bible does not specifically condemn it:**

1. We have to recognize that the Bible does not state every specific sin that is wrong:
  - a. Imagine if the New Testament spelled out every single sin – Our Bibles would be so large we could not hold them and the Bible would constantly need to be updated!
  - b. What if it said, “Don’t use the www to look up pornography!” or “If a CEO, don’t use fraud to make money on the stock market!” – 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians would be confused!
  - c. Instead the Bible gives us instructions and lays before use principles and God expects us to take those & using our heads determine what is good and evil **(Hebrews 5:14)**
2. Paul shows that not only are the sins which are specified by the Bible wrong but things which are similar in nature and character are also sinful **(Gal 5:16-26)**
  - a. Here Paul lays out two different categories – Works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit... These categories are as different as light and darkness because that’s what they are!
  - b. The works of the flesh CANNOT characterize the Christian because he is walking in the opposite direction... The fruit of the Spirit is what characterizes his attitude & choices
  - c. The consequence of which we chose is eternally important – If we allow the works of the flesh, sinful things, to reign in our lives we will not inherit the kingdom of God!
3. So... If we determine gambling violates any of these specific principles, or if it fits into the same category as these, we have determined that it is sinful and must be avoided!

### **B. Specific Biblical Principles That Show Gambling Is Sinful:**

1. Gambling is not a manifestation of the fruit of the spirit but rather the works of the flesh!
  - a. Envy & Jealousy – Gambling is a desire to take what’s in another’s pocket! It’s about loving and desiring money! Any entertainment in it is found in sinful pleasures!
  - b. Does gambling draw a person closer to God or does it drive him further away? Can I really be Christ-minded while I am gambling? Gambling does not breed desires of one walking according to the Spirit but desires of one walking according to the flesh!
  - c. Gambling is wordliness! Consider its companions! Look at the centers of gambling like Atlantic City, Las Vegas (Sin City!), etc... Even the world sees this! **(I John 2:15-17)**
2. Gambling is being a very poor steward of the blessings God has given to us: **(Luke 12:42; I Cor 4:2)**
  - a. Gambling Free Tennessee Alliance: “If a person spent \$100 a week buying \$1 lottery tickets from age 18 to 75 he would’ve spent \$296,400 but still have less than 1% chance of winning!
  - b. “In the typical state lottery, the odds of picking the right numbers are one in 12-14 million. By comparison, your chances of getting struck by lightning are one in 1.9 million”
  - c. While odds of winning a card game may be a little better casinos & those who host them know even if you do win some, you’ll be back. They win MANY more times than you!
3. Gambling is an activity that has covetousness & greed at its heart: **(Prov 21:25-26; I Cor 6:9-10)**
  - a. When a person gambles, whether he immediately realizes it or not, he is hoping to win at

- the expense of other people... He is seeking to take what belongs to another person
- b. Solomon picturesquely describes the addicted gambler – Not working with his hands but spends all day craving what is not his whereas the righteous willingly gives to others!
  - c. Greed is unrighteousness! God doesn't spell out gambling is wrong but it's sinful by nature
4. Gambling is an activity that easily becomes addictive: **(1 Cor 9:24-25; 1 Cor 6:12)**
    - a. Like with drinking, many never think they'd become "problem gamblers" or "compulsive gamblers" but people do! You may control it, but that still doesn't make it right!
    - b. Casinos don't mind people walking away winners because they know statistically that they will come back & will lose! Many lose businesses, bankruptcy, & not able to pay bills!
    - c. It's evident by the fact that some can't play golf, fantasy sports, or a card game without gambling! It's like there's no point to doing it unless there's a wager placed!
  5. Gambling goes against principles of love, mercy, and justice: **(Matthew 7:12)**
    - a. How do we justify gambling and loving our neighbor as ourselves? How can we covet what is in their pocket & hope to take it while treating them how we'd want to be treated?
    - b. Gambling is stealing by consent like dueling is murder by consent! Gambling is an effort to beat out and take away from a person what they want to keep! Hardly Christ-like!
  6. Finally, gambling is "pathway" sin that leads to various other sins and problems: **(1 Tim 6:9-11)**
    - a. Nevada is the gambling capital of the nation, and the crime rate is twice the national average, and the suicide rate is triple! Harry Reid, chairman of the Nevada gaming control commission told U.S. News and World Report, "any state trying to follow Nevada's lead will find that the social costs far outweigh any economic advantage.
    - b. It breeds contention & strife, deceitfulness, theft, and other sins... But more than that it brings many problems and sorrows into people lives! It has destroyed marriages!

### **C. Some common reasons used to justify gambling:**

1. Often gambling is justified in many people's minds because it is for a good cause: **(Romans 3:8)**
  - a. The lottery has been brought in to many states under this guise – Certainly some good has been achieved by the revenue but at what cost? At the cost of morality? At the cost of people getting hooked on gambling? At the cost of financial hardship on families?
  - b. Another form that seems harmless is raffle tickets – I have seen them sold by companies, schools, and churches! Some don't buy the raffle ticket with expectations to win but to make a donation... Doesn't change what it is! Why not just make the donation?
  - c. Gambling, i.e. the lottery, is a poor tax! Those who can afford it least do it the most!
2. Some justify gambling because they are able, in their own minds, to control it:
  - a. Some say, "I do it recreationally using the money I'd use to go to the movies or go on vacation to gamble... So it really doesn't hurt me or my family"
  - b. Being addictive is just ONE problem ... Gambling is sinful due to other principles it violates!
3. Gambling contradicts the principles that should govern the life and mindset of a Christian! It may be fun but is it worth the addiction, the ruin, the hurt, and ultimately your soul?

**CONCLUSION: While spoken about false teachers the description certainly fits the gambling industry. Let's wake up and see gambling for what it is... SIN! (2 Peter 2:12-15a)**