

WHAT ABOUT GAMBLING?

Introduction

A. Gambling in the United States has reached the point where Life magazine considers it the "gamblingest nation that ever existed."

B. Does the Bible condemn gambling? What problems exist in connection with the gambling dilemma?

I. Gambling Statistics

A. Global revenue from gambling is expected to reach \$125 billion by 2010. Last year, revenues were \$82.2 billion, and are expected to increase by 8.8% annually.

B. The United States, the world's largest gambling market, could see revenue grow from \$53.4 billion in 2005 to \$74.5 billion in 2010.

1. "Lotteries are the most-played form of legalized gambling in the U.S."
 - a) In 1963 Lotteries were banned in every state. Now 37+ States & D.C. have lotteries.
 - b) In 1997 Americans wagered \$35.8 billion on lotteries. (\$135 for every man woman & child in nation).
2. In 1978 only Nevada had casinos. Now more than 25 states have some form of casino gambling (AP, May 12, 2003)
3. Approximately fifty million people in America gamble.
 - a) more than is spent on education, religion, or medical care.
 - b) more than is spent on movies, videos and DVD's, music and books combined." (Zenit.org)
 - c) more on casinos than amusement parks & movies combined.
 - d) three times more Americans visited casinos than baseball games.
4. "States already raise around \$20 billion annually, more than 4% of total revenue, from lotteries and casinos, the New York Times reported.
5. Illegal gambling may run as high as \$100 billion per year.
 - a) Sports betting is immensely popular and most of it is illegal.
 - b) 2002 Super Bowl: \$4 billion wagered. The FBI estimates that in excess of \$2.5 billion is wagered on the NCAA Tournament each year.

II. Gambling's Seduction

A. Present in the media, internet, high schools and college campuses, in the workplace, in the home, and influences the church. (See charts)

B. Forms of Gambling (in the state of Florida) Horse racing, Dog racing, Jai Alai, fund raising events such as casino nights, bingo, raffles, amusement games, contests of chance operated by charitable and non-profit organizations, card rooms, the state lottery, casinos & bingo halls, etc.

III. Gambling Stated

A. The "wagering of money or other item of value on an uncertain event" (Encarta) "to play at any game of chance for stakes... to stake or risk money, or anything of value, on the outcome of something involving chance...bet; wager"

(Random House College Dict.)

1. Webster defines gambling: "To play or game for money or other stakes; to hazard; wager." Involved in this definition are action and value; rivalry with another person or persons; possibility of loss and uncontrolled event.
2. Thus, it involves one person trying to get what another person possesses by chance.

B. Three Elements Involved:

1. Uncertain Event – the outcome
2. A wager is made whereby one stands to gain at the loss of others
3. A winner at the expense of the loser(s).
 - a) Paraphrasing, we could say that gambling is "a participation or engagement by two or more persons in a contest or game wherein they risk their money or something of value at the expense of others."
 - b) Just because the participants consent to the risk doesn't lessen the evil
Two men may consent to a duel to the death, but this does not remove the sin of murder when one kills the other
4. Normal risk of business is not gambling as we are discussing it.
 - a) Farming has risks (weather, pests, disease, weeds, etc.)
 - b) Farmer minimizes risk by intelligent planning, careful calculations, hard work and prayer!
 - c) His profit is not at the expense of others, and the risk is not contrived.
5. Buying insurance, investing in stocks, winning a prize in a contest, etc. is not gambling.

IV. Gambling's Sinfulness

A. "Show me where the Bible condemns gambling! The word is not even in the Bible." Rape, dancing, running red lights, embezzling, bootlegging, racketeering, etc. do not occur in the Bible, but they are wrong and sinful because of Biblical principles.

B. Gambling is Covetousness

1. Covetousness is eagerness to have more, especially that which belongs to another. (epithumeo): "to fix the desire upon..."eager to have more, i.e. to have what belongs to others; hence, greedy of gain"...(Vine). (pleonexia): translated covetousness, "greedy, desire to have more"...(Thayer).
2. Every form of gambling is promoted by greed and lust to get that which belongs to somebody else. The Bible condemns such - Luke 12:13-15; Col. 3:5-8; Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 6:10
3. Covetousness is at the root of all gambling. It matters not how small the stakes, nor how rich the contestants, one who seeks to obtain what belongs to another without giving fair exchange is covetous.

C. Gambling is Selfishness

1. Love does not harm its neighbor – but gambling does! Romans 13:9-10
2. Gambling is basically stealing with consent. It is rooted in selfish ambition that esteems self above others and seeks to take what belongs to others without consideration for the welfare of others. Phil. 2:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:2-4

3. Could one practice these scriptures and at the same time be making plans to acquire his neighbor's weekly paycheck? We are to love our neighbor as ourselves and do nothing to him that we would not want done unto ourselves. Matt. 7:12
4. The fact that the participants consent to risk their money does not lessen the evil. Two men may consent to enter a duel, but that does not remove the sin of murder if one should kill the other. In gambling, all who enter do so with hope of winning at another's expense.

D. Gambling is a Waste of material blessings

1. Gambling wastes time, money, and energy that could be put to better use.
2. What if you gave someone \$1000 and they turned around and gambled it away?
3. Such action ignores the responsibility of stewardship in pursuit of the elusive pot of gold. Serving riches shows hatred for God. Luke 16:10-13
4. The gambler fails to be a good provider for his family. (I Tim. 5:8) "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house" (Prov. 15:27).

E. Gambling is Addictive

1. Horace Levinson in *The Science of Chance* says, "Gamblers gamble as lovers love, as drunkards drink, inevitably, blindly, under the dictates of an irresistible force."
2. Senator Kefauver in his book, *Crime in America*, writes, "The fascination of gambling to many people is so strong, in my opinion, it would be complete folly to make the facilities more available than they are."
3. Petty gambling can and does make habitual gamblers. As social drinking (so-called) makes drunkards, so petty gambling makes habitual gamblers. No drinker ever intended to become a drunkard and perhaps few petty gamblers intended to get hooked on gambling. See Romans 6:17
4. Gamblers Anonymous - "The greatest loss that resulted from our gambling was neither time nor money, which are gone forever, but our sense of values." (Gamblers Anonymous guidebook)

F. Gambling Is Deceptive

1. Many seek to justify gambling on the basis:
 - a) "It's just harmless entertainment"
 - b) "It's a legal business enterprise"
 - c) "It's for a good cause" (Rom. 3:8)
 - d) "It's only wrong if you can't afford it" (Prov. 14:12)
 - e) "It won't cost me my soul" (1 Cor. 6:9-10)
2. Gambling violates God's teaching on material gain. There are three ways one may properly and with God's approval obtain money or property.
 - a) He may work for it, i.e. exchange labor for something of value (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:12; Luke 10:7).
 - b) He may sell or exchange something of value (Acts 4:37; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 25:27).
 - c) He may receive it as a gift (Acts 2:45; 20:35).

3. Gambling disregards all three of these proper ways to obtain material gain. It seeks rather to gain at another's loss. Every time one person wins, others lose. Hence, the win is at somebody's loss.

4. Arguments For Gambling:

- a) "But much of it is such a small amount. How could anything like that be wrong?" For the same reason that it is just as wrong to steal a little money as it is to steal a lot. Stealing is stealing regardless of the amount and gambling is gambling regardless of the stakes.
 - b) "It is for a good cause. It is charity." Gambling in the name of charity is no more wholesome than doing any other thing that is morally wrong in the name of charity. Getting drunk in the name of charity doesn't make getting drunk any less repulsive in the sight of God.
 - c) Another argument offered is that one individual buying an occasional lottery ticket, or dropping a quarter into a slot machine, or spending "recreation" money on the horses is a legitimate way to have fun. Gambling may be fun (most temptations are), but the cost to the individual, to his family, economy, and society is too high to justify it.
 - d) Another argument advanced to justify gambling is one that claims that all of life is a gamble or a risk. But, risk-taking in the normal routine of life is different than the risk of gambling. Gambling makes an artificial risk which rewards some at the expense of others. Risks taken in life are a creative process, like the contractor who risks his capital to build a home that he then sells to someone who needs a place to live. All profit in the transaction, and get what they want. More than chance is involved in developing a profit.
5. "Gambling doesn't apply to me." Dancing: "I don't think impure thoughts" Dancing is an expression of Lasciviousness Immodest Dress: "I'm not attractive" Swimsuits are expressions of Immodesty Gambling: "I only do it for the entertainment" Gambling is an expression of Covetousness.

G. Gambling is Destructive

1. How many have killed or been killed as a result of a card game? How many have stolen in order to pay their gambling debt? How many broken homes have come about because a father began gambling and could not provide for his own because his week's pay was wasted in a poker game or horse race?
 - a) Gambling breeds many evils: crime, murder, drunkenness, broken homes, stealing, robbery, loss of position, etc.
 - b) Gambling destroys a man's credibility, honesty, reliability, reputation and family stability.
 - c) Senator Kefauver, after his extensive investigation of crime, said, "Pages could be filled with examples of how fine citizens and family men became paupers, embezzlers, and worse because of the enticements of the gambling tables."
2. J. Edgar Hoover said, "Gambling is a vicious evil, it corrupts our youth and blights the lives of adults. It becomes the spring-board of other crimes – embezzlement, robbery and even murder."

3. "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble." (Prov. 15:16)
4. Jeremiah had a word which applies to modern lottery winners. "As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so is he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall lose them in the midst of days, and at his end shall be a fool" (Jer. 17:11).

V. Gambling's Suffering

A. CRIME

1. The report on gambling and organized crime prepared by the Senate Committee on Government Operations states that, "the chief source of revenue for organized crime is illegal gambling." It further states "The huge profits from illegal gambling are the primary source of funds to finance the other activities of organized crime: drugs, prostitution, fencing, and loan sharking" (Gambling And Organized Crime, Senate Report, March 28, 1962, p. 2).
2. Nevada, which has had legalized gambling since its origin as a state, has had the highest crime rate of any state in the Union. Its per-capita crime rate is double the national rate, and its number of suicides triples the national average. Las Vegas and Reno have the highest crime rate per capita of any cities in the U.S.
3. Crime figures reported to the FBI in the 9 years after the first casino opened in New Jersey in 1977 showed that the incidence of all crime combined had increased 138 percent. (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin) Atlantic City had some 4,391 crimes per year before their casinos. Afterward the numbers rose to 11,899 crimes per year.
4. Honolulu Police Department: "We are convinced that gambling exploits those who can least afford it, and undermines community values. For example: 15.4 million Americans are problem or pathological gamblers, with more than 50 percent between 12 to 18 years of age. Social and economic costs - include unemployment benefits, welfare benefits, physical and mental health problems, theft, embezzlement, bankruptcy, suicide, child abuse and neglect, domestic abuse, divorce, incarceration, work absences, and homelessness."
5. Reader's Digest reported in 1950 that "In Akron, Ohio, two million dollars a year is bet on the numbers in the three largest rubber factories," and "At Willow Run the syndicate took a million dollars annually out of Kaiser-Frazer plant before the police closed in." Aside from the waste and loss involved, gambling breeds other evils: embezzlement, robbery, parental neglect, and cheating in other ways.
6. Business with illegal bookies offer better odds, credit, tax free payouts, and greater convenience in placing bets and collecting winnings." (Gambling in California, Roger Dunstan, California Research Bureau)
7. "They laid in wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one who is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof" (Prov. 1:18, 19).

B. POVERTY AND GRIEF

1. Gambling is generally viewed as profitable to society; regulated and taxed by government. It is offered as a solution for funding education and social programs, but the real cost: \$3 of taxpayers' money for every \$1 raised through gambling!
2. Gambling discourages labor and encourages "get rich quick" mentality.
 - a) Barnes and Teeters in *New Horizons in Criminology* said in 1947, "It is moderately estimated that the public loses \$1,200,000,000 annually through betting on horses."
 - b) "He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough! A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished." (Prov. 28:19-20) "A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him." (Prov. 28:22, 6-8)

C. SUICIDE

1. Suicides for gamblers are up 12-15% above the national average.
2. Suicide rates are 200 times higher than the national average for compulsive gamblers and 150 times higher for their spouses.
3. The FBI lists gambling as one of the six selected hurtful to young people and results in many suicides especially on the college campuses.

D. HARMS THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH

1. It weakens the individual member by bringing him under an unwholesome influence.
2. "It is good neither to eat flee, nor drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Rom. 14:21).
3. Gambling members certainly put the church in an unfavorable light with those who know the truth about gambling. Christians are to "Walk honestly toward them that are without" (I Thess. 4:12) and "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." (Rom. 12:17)
4. Gambling weakens the Christian's voice against worldliness. I John 2:15-17
5. The Christian is to shun and abhor evil. I Peter 3:11; Rom. 12:9

Conclusion

Gambling is parasitic, selfish and greedy. It thrives from the lives of others and is out for everything for nothing. Someone said that "gambling chloroforms the soul, freezes the very milk of human kindness, and kills all feeling for the spiritual." The old French proverb says, "Gambling is the child of avarice, the brother of iniquity, the father of mischief."