

GAMBLING

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One of the great blights against our society is the growing trend of the vice of gambling. Gambling is a disease that has plagued mankind for centuries. More and more, gambling has become a way of life, and people are being desensitized into thinking it is an harmless form of entertainment. On the contrary, it is far from harmless. Gambling has resulted in broken homes, thefts, murder, starving children, broken-hearts, drunkenness, and suicide.

Though some people confuse gambling or wagering with taking risks, it is far more than simply taking a chance. There are three essential elements in gambling. First, there is the element of a stake or risk such as a “kitty,” “pot,” or “pool.” Second, there is the element of chance which is arbitrarily determined by the parties involved and is out of personal control. And, third, there is the element of a prize for the winner who is arbitrarily chosen by the element of chance. Though there are those who will argue that everything in life involves risks, gambling involves more than simple chance. Farming, crossing the street, driving a car, and investing necessitate risks, but these do not make gain by the loss of others.

Though gambling is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, it is condemned in principle. Consider these:

First, gambling violates the basic laws of good stewardship. There are three legitimate laws of economy. The law of labor in which labor is rewarded (1 Timothy 5:18; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Also, there is the law of exchange in which a product is exchanged with something of equal value (Galatians 6:7-8; James 4:13-15). Finally, there is the law of love in which benevolence is shown to those in need (1 Corinthians 16:2-3; Matthew 7:12; 22:39). Since no one gambles to loose, then all must gamble in order to win. No one freely gives up what they risk, but they intend to win more than they ventured. For this reason, gambling is sometimes defined as “stealing by consent.” Can a person truly say he or she loves their neighbor while taking away what he or she has not freely given?

Second, gambling is based on and promotes covetousness (1 Timothy 6:10; Ephesians 5:5). Without a strong appeal to greed, gambling would hold little and possibly no attraction. Why do people gamble? To get money! The gambling industry knows this quite well. Why do they want you to think you might be the

next winner? Because it creates inordinate desire for wealth. The reality is this: if you gamble, you will far more likely be the next loser.

Third, gambling is accompanied by evil bed partners. Jesus said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). No matter where gambling goes, organized crime follows. The so-called glorious Las Vegas is full of organized crime. Gambling carries all the promise of revenue, but it actually costs our government. There is more than enough money used for gambling to build a hospital, a high school, a junior college, and a library in each of the three thousand counties in the United States. Did you know, you are three and a half times more likely to be killed by lightning and five times more likely to be eaten by a shark than to win a state lottery? For this reason, some people refer to state lotteries as a tax on people who are poor at math.

Gambling is not godliness. It is against God and harmful to society. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).