

# **THE CHRISTIAN AND GAMBLING**

## **Matthew 5:13-16**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Our lesson at this time in the series “The Christian and.....” will center on the subject of the Christian and gambling.
  - A. In the lesson we will give consideration to the following:
    1. What is gambling?
    2. Statistical information.
    3. What the Bible say about gambling.
2. “In May 2004 the Gallup Organization conducted a nationwide poll to determine the moral acceptability of various social issues. Pollsters interviewed one thousand adults aged eighteen and older regarding their opinions...Overall, gambling was considered morally acceptable by 66% of those asked. It tied with divorce as the social issue considered most acceptable to people. The acceptability of gambling has risen slightly since 2003 when 63% of Americans polled pronounced it morally acceptable.” <http://www.libraryindex.com/pages/1561/Gambling-in-America-An-Overview-PUBLIC-OPINION.html>

### **BODY:**

#### **1. CLARIFICATION OF SOME MATTERS**

- A. In this lesson we are not talking about taking a chance.
  1. Normally, those who seek to defend gambling seek to do so with an argument about planting crops, driving an automobile, owning stocks and bonds, and so on, as being of the nature of a chance and, thus, if taking a chance is sin, these would be sin too.
- B. We have to agree, if taking a chance were sin, then every time we took a chance it would be sin.
  1. But, the taking of a chance, as per planting crops, driving an automobile, etc., is not sin, because such activities do not fit the definition of gambling.
- C. To gamble is the action of one who gambles.
  1. “Gambling is the wagering of money or something of material value on an event with an uncertain outcome with the primary intent of winning additional money and/or material goods.”

Wikipedia, Online Encyclopedia.

2. Thus, we see that gambling and the taking of a chance, or a risk, are not the same.
  - A. In gambling, one stands to win at the loss of others.
  - B. In the others areas this is not true.
    1. Of course there is chance involved, but the outcome does not have the potential of a negative result for others.
- D. Thus, to use these as an argument to defend gambling is to use a very weak argument at least.

## **2. WILL NOT ARGUE THAT THE WORD GAMBLE IS IN THE BIBLE**

- A. We will not endeavor to argue that the term “gamble” is in the Bible and is forbidden in a text such as, “Thou shalt not gamble.”
  1. Perhaps you will recall that in our study of the subject of drug abuse we saw no passage that said, “Thou shalt not be addicted to heroin, cocaine, etc.”
    - A. But, nevertheless, we saw ample proof from the scriptures that drug use is wrong.
- B. To point to the Bible and say you have no “Thou shalt not,” is another weak argument.
  1. By the way, the following words are not found in the K.J.V. of the Bible, “rape,” “manslaughter,” “larceny,” “embezzling,” “bootlegging,” “white slavery,” etc.

## **3. IMPORTANT STATISTICS**

- A. “The gambling industry has grown tenfold in the U.S. since 1975.
- B. Thirty-seven states now have lotteries. (43 states as of 2008)
- C. 15 million people display some sign of gambling addiction.
- D. Two-thirds of the adult population placed some kind of bet last year.
- E. Gambling profits in casinos are more than \$30 billion while lotteries are about 17 billion annually.
- F. 'Players' with household incomes under \$10,000 bet nearly three times as much on lotteries as those with incomes over \$50,000.
- G. Gambling among young people is on the increase: 42 percent of 14-year-olds, 49 percent of 15-year-olds, 63 percent of 16-year-olds, 76 percent of 18-year-olds.

Page 3

- H. Internet gambling has nearly doubled every year since 1997. In 2001

it exceeded \$2 billion.

- I. According to the American Psychological Association the Internet could be as addictive as alcohol, drugs, and gambling.
- J. After casinos opened in Atlantic City, the total number of crimes within a thirty-mile radius increased 100 percent.
- K. The average debt incurred by a male pathological gambler in the U.S. is between \$55,000 and \$90,000 (it is \$15,000 for female gamblers).
- L. The average rate of divorce for problem gamblers is nearly double that of non-gamblers.
- M. The suicide rate for pathological gamblers is twenty times higher than for non-gamblers (one in five attempts suicide).
- N. Sixty-five percent of pathological gamblers commit crimes to support their gambling habit.”  
<http://www.overcominggambling.com/facts.html#Statistics>
- O. In the first two months of casino gambling crime rose 25% in Atlantic City, N. J.
  - 1. The Police Dept. was increased from 44 to 406 officers.
  - 2. The next time someone tries to justify gambling by pointing to the increased tax revenue remember this.
- P. “Domestic Issues
  - 1. Effects of Adult Problem Gambling on Children:
    - A. Children of compulsive gamblers are often prone to suffer abuse, as well as neglect, as a result of parental problem or pathological gambling (NORC, 1999).
      - 1. NORC - National Opinion Research Center
    - B. Research consistently shows higher rates of pathological gambling in teens whose parents gamble too much (Gupta & Derevensky, 1997; Jacobs, 2000; Wallisch & Liu, 1996).
    - C. Children of problem gamblers have been shown to have higher levels of use for tobacco, alcohol, drug use, and overeating than do their classroom peers (Gupta & Derevensky, 1997).
    - D. Child endangerment and child abuse may increase (NRC, 1999).
      - 1. NRC - National Research Council
    - E. The NRC reported on two studies indicating between 10 and

17 percent of children of compulsive gamblers had been abused (NRC, 1999).

- F. Child endangerment was exemplified in Oregon with the September 2001 report of an Oregon licensed day-care provider who left three children (1, 2 and 3 years old) in a van for over 11 hours while she gambled in a casino (Lawrence-Turner, 2001, September 15).

Q. Domestic Violence

1. According to the National Research Council (1999), studies indicate that between 25-50 percent of spouses of pathological gamblers have been abused.
2. Case studies of 10 casino communities revealed that the majority of those communities witnessed increases in domestic violence related to the opening of casinos (National Opinion Research Center, 1999).

R. Crime

1. Several studies suggest that crime rates rise with increased availability of gambling to communities, but this issue is under intense debate.
2. Forty percent of clients enrolled in Oregon's gambling treatment system reported committing crimes to finance their gambling (Moore, 2003).
3. As access to money becomes more limited, gamblers often resort to crime in order to pay debts, appease bookies, maintain appearances, and garner more money to gamble (NRC, 1999).
4. Studies of Gamblers Anonymous (GA) members report that approximately half of the participants had stolen to gamble and over one-third had been arrested (Thompson, Gazel, & Rickman, 1996).

5. The vast majority of gambling-related crimes are non-violent; embezzlement, check forgery, stealing credit cards, fencing stolen goods, tax evasion, insurance fraud, employee theft and

fraud are common gambling-related crimes.

S. Suicide/Depression

1. Ten percent of clients enrolled in Oregon's gambling treatment system considered and formulated plans to commit suicide

within six months of enrollment to treatment (Moore, 2003).

2. A major depressive disorder is likely to occur in 76 percent of pathological gamblers (Unwin Davis, & Leeuw, 2000)."

<http://www.npgaw.org/problemgamblinginformation/factsfigures.asp>

T. Consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:33.

#### **4. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GAMBLING?**

A. In study of this subject, the Christian should realize their responsibility to the implications that are found in the Word.

1. Gambling violates the principle of stewards.
  - A. The Christian is to be a faithful and wise steward - Luke 12:42; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 4:2.
  - B. Legion are the names of those who fail in this area because of gambling.
2. Gambling goes against the "golden rule" - Matthew 7:12.
  - A. We are to love our neighbor as we do ourselves (Matthew 22:39), and love works no ill against their fellowman - Romans 13:10.
  - B. To acquire another's goods by gambling is not doing to him as you would have him to do you.
3. Gambling contradicts the work ethic.
  - A. According to the scripture, man is to eat his bread by work and the sweat of his face - 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Genesis 3:19.
4. Gambling sets bad examples.
  - A. Christians must be concerned about their influence for truth and righteousness - Matthew 5:13-16.
  - B. We must provide things honest in the sight of all men - Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21.
  - C. We must not give occasion for the devil to desecrate the word and name of God - 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:5, 10.
- D. Tertullian (So-called church father who lived 160-220 A.D.), is reported to have said, "If you say you are a Christ when you are a dice player you say what you are not, because you are partner with the world."
5. Gambling causes other sins.
  - A. In Reno, Nevada, the Police Dept. estimated that 75% of

their embezzlement cases were related to gambling.

B. In the Akron Beacon Journal, June 2, 1968, the following was stated, "Everybody in town (Las Vegas) at one time or another has been offered to share a wife in trade for gas or repairs."

1. These words were from a gasoline station attendant who worked in Las Vegas at the time.

6. Gambling affects homes in a negative way.

A. Remember what we saw earlier when we looked at the domestic issues?

B. "Problem gambling affects not only the person experiencing gambling difficulties but also their families, friends and often employers. In 1999 the Federal Government's Productivity Inquiry into Australia's Gambling Industries, found that every one person with a gambling problem between other people are negatively affected."

<http://www.gisnsw.org.au/family/Family-Family.html>

C. "The estimated, annual prevalence of problem gambling among Adults, Age 18 and older in New York is 4.9% or 668,000 residents. (2006 NYS OASAS Household Survey.) Estimated annual prevalence of problem gambling amount of students in grades 7-12 in New York State is 10.1% or 141,055 students. Estimated annual prevalence for at risk youth for gambling is 10.0% or 139,137 students. (2006) NYS OASAS School Survey.)

Problem gambling affects the family as a whole, as well as each and every member. It disrupts family life through its negative financial consequences, the deterioration of basic trust between the gambler and other family members, and the

loss of the problem gambler's ability to carry out his or her normal family roles and responsibilities. These developments in turn produce social, emotional, and even physical changes in the family's well-being. In adjusting to the impact of gambling addiction, family members may become increasingly isolated from each other and from their

community. Family members often need help to recover the impact of the problem gambler's behaviors as well as

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Page 7

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support in building a family environment that supports recovery for all family members.” <http://www.pederson-krag.org/gampro.html>

- D. “In a survey of nearly 400 Gamblers Anonymous members, 28 percent reported being either separated or divorced as a direct result of their gambling problems. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission reported that it received 'abundant testimony and evidence that compulsive gambling introduces a greatly heightened level of stress tension into marriages and families, often culminating in divorce and other manifestations of familial disharmony. The number of divorces in Harrison County, Mississippi, nearly tripled since the introduction of casinos. The county, which is home to ten casinos, has averaged an additional 850 divorces per year since casinos arrived. A nationwide survey undertaken for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission found that 'respondents representing 2 million adults identified a spouse's gambling as a significant factor in a prior divorce.’”

<http://www.citizenlink.org/FOSI/gambling/cog/A000002186.cfm>

- E. “In NORC’s survey, 53.5 percent of identified pathological gamblers reported having been divorced, versus 18.2 percent of non-gamblers and 29.8 percent of low-risk gamblers. Further, NORC respondents representing two million adults identified a spouse’s gambling as a significant factor in a prior divorce.” <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/ngisc/reports/7.pdf>

Page 8

## 7. Gambling contributes to homelessness.

- A. “Individuals with gambling problems seem to constitute a higher percentage of the homeless population. The Atlantic City Rescue Mission reported to the Commission that 22 percent of its clients are homeless due to a gambling problem. A survey of homeless service providers in Chicago found that 33 percent considered gambling a contributing factor in the homelessness of people in their

program. Other substantiated this of Rescue cited gambling with more than revealed that 20 <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/ngisc/reports/7.pdf>

data presented to the Commission further link. In a survey of 1,100 clients at dozens Missions across the United States, 18 percent as a cause of their homelessness. Interviews 7,000 homeless individuals in Las Vegas percent reported a gambling problem.”

8. Gambling contributes to suicide, which is forbidden by scripture.
  - A. “According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, approximately one in five pathological gamblers attempts suicide. The Council further notes that the suicide rate among pathological gamblers is higher than for any other addictive disorder. A survey of nearly 400 Gamblers Anonymous members revealed that two-thirds had contemplated suicide, 47 percent had a definite plan to kill themselves, and 77 percent stated that they have wanted to die.” <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/ngisc/reports/7.pdf>
  - B. “A recent study in Australia found that 81 percent of gamblers surveyed considered suicide, and 30 percent attempted it at least once in a 12-month period.” New Gambling Studies Highlight Age-Old Problem, Wayne Jackson, ChristianCourier.com
  - C. Can we not see the grave danger when we put ourselves into a life style that may well lead us to the taking of our own life?
  - D. How could a Christian parent even hope to justify such conduct in themselves as they participate in such a way of

Page 9

life that could encourage their children to follow their example?

9. Gambling displays a covetous spirit which is contrary to God's will for man - Exodus 20:17; Hebrews 13:5.
10. No where in the Bible is there found any indication of gambling for entertainment purposes.
  - A. The casting of lots is seen often in the Bible, but never for entertainment purposes - Leviticus 16:8; Joshua 18:10; Nehemiah 11:1; Matthew 27:35; Acts 1:26.

## CONCLUSION:

1. As Christians, called out of the world, let us be careful that we do not forget that such things as gambling fall clearly within the realm of those things that we have been called out of.
  - A. The influence of gambling is worldly.
    1. This cannot be successfully denied.
  - B. Gambling, much like many other addictions, may start off “innocent.”
    1. However, as time goes by, one may become more involved until they become a compulsive gambler.
    2. Even that which is “lawful” becomes problematic when one allows himself to be brought under the “power” or control of it to the point where it controls his life - 1 Corinthians 6:12.
    3. A “sure-fire” way of making sure one does not “cross the line” on these issues is to not get involved to start with.
      - A. Just like the drug addict, I am sure no compulsive gambler ever started out to become one.
2. As Christians, who pattern their lives after Christ, no doubt we would find it difficult to picture Jesus in a Casino, down some dark ally on His knees “shooting craps”, or even socially gambling with some friends.
  - A. If we cannot honestly see him doing it, how can we see ourselves doing it as we walking in his footsteps? - 1 Peter 2:21.
3. With all of the negative things associated with gambling, are we ready to overlook them just so we can buy a Lottery Ticket, bet on a horse race, or some other form of social gambling?

Page 10

- A. If you choose to gamble, and I am wrong on this, what have I lost?
- B. If you choose to gamble, and I am right on this, what have you lost?
  1. There is a way that is right and cannot be wrong.
  2. Is that not the safest path to choose?
  3. Should we not encourage our children to follow that path by the example we set?