

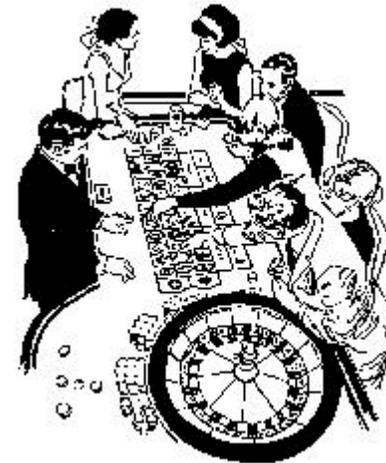
Tried to visualize this scene. The greatest event of all history was taking place. Jesus had been arrested (Matt. 26:57) and falsely accused (Matt. 26:60) and now was condemned to die (Matt. 26:66). He had been scourged with a whip (Matt. 27:26) which had marred His visage more than any man (Isaiah 52:14). Meaning that, "His appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness." He was to die the most horrifying death man could devise as predicted more than 500 years earlier in Psalm 22:16. He was nailed to the cross to slowly die an agonizing death so that we could be saved from the penalty of our sins and have the gift of eternal life.

There, near the cross are several Roman soldiers, perhaps on their knees as if praying to our Lord for forgiveness because their bloody hands had just crucified an innocent man (John 27:24). A closer look reveals that these soldiers were not praying but they are gambling for the garments of Christ (Matt. 27:35) which was also predicted more than 500 years earlier in Psalm 22:18. Salvation was so near, yet because of their material concerns rather than spiritual concerns, those soldiers missed the opportunity to eternal life. They could have sought forgiveness just as the repentant thief on the cross next to Jesus had done. They could have heard the assuring words of Christ that their sins were forgiven, but instead they now have eternal damnation and will suffer in the torments of eternal Hell. Multitudes have neglected "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3).

# The CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

## GAMBLING



Cornerstone Booklets

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**Acceptance of Gambling** Gambling is America's most unrecognized social cancer. For years it was considered a social evil, and it was conducted by the underworld of organized crime. Gambling has now been legalized. We now have a whole new generation that accepts gambling as proper and does not think that gambling reflects poorly upon its character. Few Americans seem to realize the moral revolution that has taken place so quickly. A reliable estimate is that as much as 88 percent of the population gamble at least occasionally. The daily routine of tens of millions of Americans involves gambling in one form or another.

State lotteries, church bingo, and charitable organizations have promoted and dignified gambling to make it appear as a harmless and respectable recreation or pastime. Gambling is frequently justified because some of the profits go for worthy causes such as public education and the elderly. Others point out that the casinos provide needed employment. Regardless of what small social benefits there may appear to be, the fact is that gambling is biblically wrong and a social epidemic in America that is destroying lives and families. Americans have forsaken the biblical morality that our nation was built upon.

In reality gambling is no better than robbery and fraud. The gains of the winnings are made at the expense of the losers and the gain is obtained by chance rather than rendering goods or services. Billions of dollars are gambled that should be used for human physical and spiritual needs.

**Gambling Is Biblically Wrong** Gambling is wrong; the Bible is clear on this. The whole concept of gambling meets with God's disapproval because it is based upon covetousness, greed, discontent, unwise stewardship (of time, money, and talent). Gambling violates the work ethic and encourages lack of concern for eternal matters.

**Covetousness** The covetousness of gambling is a sign of the evil last days in which we live. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, **covetous**... lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2Tim. 3:1-4). The 10th Commandment prohibits covetousness. "Thou shalt not covet..." (Exodus 20:17). There are grave spiritual consequences to the practice of covetousness, which leads to breaking all the other Commandments.

Some Christians also think it would be good to "hit the lottery" and give much of the money to the Lord's work. The concept meets with God's disapproval, and we are to support His work through tithes and offerings by biblical means of income. Actually money gotten by gambling is tainted money. "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labor shall increase" (Prov. 13:11). "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing" (Prov. 10:2).

It is very important that we show our children the wrongs of gambling. We must never convey the idea of getting something for nothing. Obviously we set the example by never gambling in any form. As a family activity we must never take our children to places of gambling such as casinos or racetracks.

**Gambling and Eternal Life** The Bible says: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul" (Mark 6: 36)? The answer is obvious, nothing. The pursuit of riches or the possession of riches (Matt. 19:16) can keep a person from heaven. "He also that receiveth seed among the thorns is he that heareth the Word; and the care of this world, and deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22).

Consider this. Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh (1Tim. 3:16), our Creator (Colossians 1:16), had left heaven and took upon Himself a human body through the virgin birth (Matt. 1:23). He lived the sinless life and now is Saviour of the world (John 4:42). He was to die for our sins (1Cor. 15:3) and bear our sins in His own body on the cross (1Peter 2:24), and shed His precious blood as an atonement for our sins (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Compulsive gambling leads to criminal activities. A juvenile theft ring was discovered in which thousands of dollars worth of merchandise were stolen and fenced to pay off gambling debts. People will sell their possessions, write bad checks, steal from relatives, sell drugs, rob banks, and women become prostitutes just to pay off their gambling debts.

**Government Involvement** The government has a double standard which causes lack of respect for authority. Gambling is legal and encouraged and is widely promoted and advertised if it is state sponsored. Private gambling where the state does not get a "cut" is illegal and a crime for which a person can be arrested, fined or imprisoned. This double standard makes it especially difficult for parents and teachers to teach young people the right and wrong of gambling. It is wrong for the government to finance any program from the moral weakness of its citizens. Those who are hurt the most are inevitably those who can least afford it. The state is also destroying the work ethic and promoting materialism and a fantasy of a life of luxury without labor, an image particularly harmful to the poor.

**The Christian and Gambling** The fact that gambling has been legalized and legitimized in our society is not a valid reason for any Christian to gamble. Ample Biblical proofs make it clear that Christians should shun all forms of gambling including lottery tickets, bingo, raffle tickets, office sports pools, as well as casino and racetrack betting. Christians should not seek employment in casinos, sell lottery or raffle tickets.

Christians are stewards of God's property and we are to use the resources of time, talents, and money to His glory and service. The Christian gambler is financing sinners, supporting an industry that is destroying lives, wasting precious time, and neglecting his responsibilities. Christians should separate themselves from evil practices and not be concerned for laying up treasure upon earth rather than treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21).

**Materialism** The Lord has blessed our nation with many worldly goods but instead of being thankful and content, many have allowed materialism and money to be their "god," thus breaking the Commandments 1,2, and 10. The Bible states, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1John 2:15). The love of money and desiring to be rich are harmful. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1Tim. 6:10). "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown man in destruction and perdition." There is more to life than material possessions. "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). God wants us to be content with His provision. "Let your conversation (conduct) be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have..." (Hebrews 13:5). "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Tim. 6:6).

**Work Ethic** Gambling violates the biblical Judeo-Christian work ethic. The legitimate means to gain wealth are hard work (2Thess. 3:10), wise investments (Luke 19:1-27), and by inheritance or gifts (2Cor. 12:14). Gambling does not fall into any of these categories. God has ordained labor and work to earn an income (see Genesis 3:17-19). "For this is the will of God... to work with your own hands... that ye may have lack of nothing" (1Thess. 4:3, 11-12). The idea of getting something for nothing meets with God's disapproval. "... that if any would not work, neither should he eat... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2Thess. 3:10, 12). In gambling the winner eats the loser's bread. The "get rich quick" and "get something for nothing" mindset is remarkably similar to that of a criminal who steals: obtaining what he did not earn at the expense of another.

**Idolatry** Gamblers are generally very superstitious. They use all types of good luck charms, prayer, cross their fingers, and make a sign of the cross. To give credence to good luck charms is idolatry which God forbids in the Second Commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Exodus 20:4,5). God is sovereign in the smallest of matters (Jonah 1:7).

**Destruction to the Family** Gambling has adverse effects upon families. Thousands of lives and homes are being destroyed. The obsession of gambling affects all age groups from youth to old age.

**Teens** Gambling is now being called the third addiction for teens taking back seat only to drug and alcohol abuse. A recent survey found that 90 percent of high school students gambled once a year and that 30 percent gambled at least once a week. Not only are underage gamblers flocking to the casinos by the thousands, but they are also running their own gambling rings. National studies revealed that teenagers are four times more likely than adults to become compulsive gamblers, and 80 percent of adult compulsive gamblers started gambling at 14 or under. Gambling causes failure in school, criminal activities (to get money for gambling), and suicides when gambling gets out of control.

**Poor, Uneducated and Working Class** Research has shown that this class of citizens spend a much larger amount of their incomes on lotteries than high income players, and many lose their paychecks. Many people on welfare waste their money purchasing multiple lottery tickets. Tragically, many states have designed clever, sophisticated advertising campaigns to especially target this most vulnerable market.

**Parents** Money that should go for family needs is gambled away. Wives and children suffer when there is not enough money left for food, clothing, and housing. Bills go unpaid, tension builds, arguments increase, and eventually the home is broken. Not only are paychecks gambled, but savings are withdrawn and lost to gambling. Family businesses have been known to be lost to the gambling fever. The gambler neglects his family by spending his time at the casino or the racetrack rather than with his family.

**Elderly** They are also victims of gambling fever. One newspaper report says, "The old folks can't wait to cash their Social Security checks and come to the casino. Older people may gamble to excess after the death of a spouse or after retiring and losing the sense of worth they felt when they were working. Gaming observers and psychologists say the growing phenomenon of elderly gambling is eating up the pension checks, and in some cases even the life savings of many retirees."

**Addiction** The secular world calls gambling addiction a disease, but God calls it a sin. Just like any other sin, it is a clever trick of Satan to enslave people and keep them in bondage. The Bible says "he that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house" (Prov. 15:27). Gambling addiction enslaves approximately 8 to 10 million Americans which is from 10 to 15 percent of those who gamble, however, experts believe the number of compulsive gamblers is much higher. Most of the compulsive gamblers started betting in their early teens. Satan's deception makes winning glorious and an answer to all one's problems, however it leads to great suffering that the compulsive gambler brings upon himself and that he inflicts upon others. Gambling addiction often leads to suicide. Much depression, heartbreak, and despair can be avoided if gambling would not be part of one's lifestyle. For the compulsive, addicted gambler there is good news in the gospel of Jesus Christ: the bondage of sin can be broken. When a person is born again (John 3:3), he is not only free from the penalty of sin (Rom. 8:1), but he is also free from the power of sin. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18).

**Evil Outcomes-Bad Company** The Bible says "bad company corrupts good morals" (1Cor. 15:33). Gambling is known to attract the most vile members of society such as grafters, embezzlers, forgers, confidence men, pick pockets, burglars, prostitutes, and bandits.

**Criminal Activities** Some would argue that legalized gambling ends illegal gambling. However, law-enforcement officials say that states that allow legal gambling have increased illegal gambling because they have helped to remove gambling's stigma and made it appear as a harmless and respectable pastime or recreation. Once people start playing the lottery, they often progress to other forms of gambling including illegal gambling. Illegal bookmakers are still popular, because they offer better odds than state-run operations, and the winnings are completely tax-free. Legalized gambling has proven to be just as dominated by organized crime as illegal gambling.