**Gambling – What’s the problem?**

**Introduction**

1. **Romans 12:1-2** – the command comes from the reality of the influence our environment has from us.
2. It takes effort, and God’s grace to guard us from the corruption the world brings – **John 17:15-17**
3. With the degradation of morality in our culture comes the danger of being desensitized to blatant sinful conduct. We must avoid this at all costs by maintaining a spiritual perspective through fellowship with God.
4. Gambling is a common vice we must beware of:
   1. “Approximately 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lives; 60% in the past year. Some form of legalized gambling is available in 48 states plus the District of Columbia.” (National Council for Problem Gambling)
   2. “2 million U.S. adults (1%) are estimated to meet the criteria for severe gambling problems in a given year. Another 4-6 million (2-3%) would be considered to have mild or moderate gambling problems.” (ibid.)
5. What’s the problem with gambling?
6. Gambling Defined
7. Definitions
   1. “play games of chance for money; bet” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
   2. “to stake or risk money, or anything of value, on the outcome of something involving chance” (dictionary.com)
   3. “gambling, the betting or staking of something of value, with consciousness of risk and hope of gain, on the outcome of a game, a contest, or an uncertain event whose result may be determined by chance or accident or have an unexpected result by reason of the bettor’s miscalculation.” (Glimne, Dan. "gambling". Encyclopedia Britannica, 16 Oct. 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/gambling. Accessed 26 October 2023.)
8. Elements Included in Gambling
   1. An event or outcome that is uncertain and determined by chance.
   2. A staking of something upon the matter of chance with hope for gain.
   3. A winner that gains at the expense of the loser based upon the outcome by chance.
   4. Many forms – lottery, casinos (games, poker, slots), sports, races, raffles, general wagers, etc.
9. Diversions from the Problem
10. Efforts for Financial Increase
    1. **Gambling is not wrong because it constitutes an effort to make financial gain.**
    2. **Luke 10:7** – laborer is worthy of his wages.
    3. **Proverbs 10:4-5; 13:11** – the scripture reveals godly principles for increase – it is increase via ungodliness which is sinful.
    4. Three Methods of Transferring Money/Property:
       1. Work – **Luke 10:7** – money is earned through labor.
       2. Exchange – **James 4:13, 15** – buying, selling, trading, investing.
       3. Gift – **1 Timothy 6:18; Numbers 27:1-11** (inheritance laws) – money given and received without expectation of return.
       4. **Gambling doesn’t fit any of these methods.**
11. Taking Risk
    1. **Gambling is not wrong simply because it involves risk.**
    2. “Life is a gamble, a game we all play” – **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12** – time and chance, but this is not a gamble.
    3. Farming – **Genesis 8:22** – while there may be uncertainty as to yield, there is natural law.
    4. Buying insurance – buying something of value, where buyer and seller both stand to gain – financial protection – **1 Timothy 5:8** – providing for your own.
    5. Investing – **Matthew 25:27** – The stock market may involve risk, but there is the buying and selling of value, where both the buyer and seller stand to gain.
12. The Degree of Gambling
    1. **It is the principle of gambling that is wrong, not the amount.**
    2. **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22** – if gambling is evil, it must be abstained from – there is no degree of evil which a Christian can tolerate.
    3. **White lies? Just one drink? Just petty theft?**
    4. **The degree argument for involvement in anything the bible reveals as sinful is immature, dishonest, and ungodly – 1 Peter 1:15-16**
13. Legality – **Romans 13:1-2; Acts 5:29**
    1. A requirement by God must be met even if the government forbids it.
    2. A prohibition by God must be avoided even if the government requires it or allows it.
14. Implicit Evil – ***“and the like” (Galatians 5:21)***
15. The Bible doesn’t say specifically, “Gambling is a sin,” so it is okay?
    1. This is an argument from ignorance, and immaturity – **Hebrew 5:12-14**
    2. We are to test all things by the principles of scripture – **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**
16. The Bible does not limit itself to explicit prohibition – **Hebrews 7:12-14** – God did not have to explicitly forbid priests from coming out of Judah to make such unlawful.
    1. **Does the bible explicitly forbid abortion, marijuana, pornography, bikinis, gay marriage?**
    2. **Galatians 5:19-21** – “and the like” indicates that there are things not mentioned in the list that are “like” these in that they are of the flesh.
    3. **1 Thessalonians 5:22** – the idea is that evil takes many “forms,” and every form must be avoided.
17. **It is a necessary conclusion that gambling is sinful.**
18. What’s the problem?
19. It is Covetousness
    1. **Ephesians 5:3, 5** – covetousness is not fitting for saints, and will bar one out of the kingdom.
    2. **Covetousness** – *pleonexia* – lit., “a desire to have more” (pleon, “more,” echo, “to have”) (VINE)
       1. “avarice, i.e. (by implication) fraudulency, extortion” (STRONG)
          1. Avarice – extreme greed for wealth or material gain (New Oxford American Dictionary)
       2. “the state of desiring to have more than one’s due, greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness” (BDAG)
          1. So, and inordinate desire for more.
    3. **1 Timothy 6:9-10** – desire to be rich, harmful, stray from the faith in greediness.
    4. **Colossians 3:5; Matthew 6:24** – idolatry, cannot serve both God and mammon.
    5. “Getting rich and wanting more is not why I gamble. I do it for fun.”
       1. No different than saying, “I don’t drink wine for the effects of alcohol, but for the antioxidants.”
       2. There are games, and fun to be had that is without wagering – the whole point of gambling is with the goal to gain more.
       3. In gambling, there is an effort to gain what is not rightfully yours – whether one can say they are doing it just for fun or not is beside the point.
    6. Beware of covetousness – **Luke 12:15** – if we are on guard against covetousness we will not be gambling for any reason, for if it is not from the motivation of greed, it will breed it. (NOTE: question of inheritance, **v. 13**, which is not sinful – warning still followed).
20. It is Stealing by Consent
    1. **Gambling is an effort to take (win) what is another’s without their desire to give it.**
       1. It is not a donation/charity.
       2. It is not a trade, or purchase of goods.
       3. It is considered a loss, not a gift.
    2. **Ephesians 4:28** – stealing is antithetical to the new man in Christ.
       1. Gain without labor.
       2. Taking what is another’s.
       3. Harming another.
       4. Holy Spirit says – gain by honest/lawful means, and use that to help others, not take from them.
    3. **When teammate John Paxson asked Michael Jordan why he wanted to play blackjack with him and another teammate when they were only playing for one dollar a hand, he answered, “I wanna say I got your money in my pocket.”** – this is gambling, and there is always a “victim.”
21. It is Destructive in Nature
    1. **1 Timothy 6:9-10** – desire to gain more money brings with it other temptations and lusts and destroys and brings other evil and sorrow.
    2. What is its fruit? – **Matthew 7:16-18** – **cf. Proverbs 23:29-30** – the evil of alcohol is demonstrated by its effects/fruit. So it is with gambling:
       1. Heavy debt – leading to personal ruin, family ruin.
       2. Mental/emotional problems – leading to suicide.
          1. Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, anti-social personality.
       3. Crime/sin to feed the sin of gambling – theft, lying, violence, etc.
          1. “an estimated 50 percent of those affected by gambling problems commit crimes in order to support their addiction.” (addictions.com)
       4. Addictive – working against self-control.
       5. Existence of foundations shows the destructive nature of gambling – National Council on Problem Gambling, Gamblers Anonymous.
    3. In 2018, the Supreme Court lifted the federal ban on sports gambling. Since then, television has been bombarded with commercials for sports gambling.
       1. With each commercial comes a caution about the dangers of gambling.
       2. Some commercials are specifically tailored for such warnings – NFL and National Council on Problem Gambling commercial – “Unbelievable happens. So, if you bet set limits. Only bet what you can afford to lose.”
22. It Violates the Principle of Work Ethic
    1. **2 Thessalonians 3:6-12** – specific problem of idleness in Thessalonica as they were led to believe that the 2nd coming was imminent.
       1. **(v. 7)** – not eat free of charge, but work.
       2. **(v. 10)** – no work, no eat.
       3. **(v. 12)** – work, eat own bread.
       4. The principle is that ones sustenance/needs are met in honest labor, not through ways which avoid work, such as taking advantage of the benevolence of others.
    2. The Thessalonians’ problem was not gambling, but gambling falls under the general prohibition of avoiding work while seeking to gain.
       1. Not a condemnation of gift giving and receiving.
       2. Not a condemnation of inheritance.
       3. Not a condemnation of benevolence in the case of legitimate needs.
    3. We are told to work to provide for ourselves and others – **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; Ephesians 4:28**
       1. Not get rich quick schemes.
       2. Not profit solely at another person’s loss.
23. It Violates the Principle of Good Stewardship
    1. **Luke 16:9-13** – following the parable of the unjust steward, application is made regarding the use of physical wealth in godly ways.
       1. What we have has been entrusted to us by God.
       2. For our needs – **1 Timothy 6:6-8**
       3. For our family’s needs – **1 Timothy 5:8**
       4. For our brethren’s needs – **Romans 12:13**
       5. For the work of the church – **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**
       6. Money is a tool entrusted to us by God to use for His glory.
    2. Gambling is the exact opposite of good stewardship:
       1. “The house always wins.”
       2. “The odds of winning a Powerball jackpot — no matter the size — stand near 1 in 292.2 million. Chances of taking home Mega Millions' top prize are even lower, at about 1 in 302.6 million. Because of the almost impossible chance of winning big, experts stress that you shouldn't spend all your money on lottery tickets.” (https://apnews.com/article/powerball-mega-millions-winning-odds-numbers-a3e5a8e8e7ed15d7500c1d6acdab6785#)
24. It Violates the Principle of Love
    1. **Matthew 22:39** – the commandment 2nd only to loving God.
    2. **Luke 6:31** – doing to others as you would have them do to you.
    3. **Romans 13:8-10** (you shall not covet) – love does no harm to a neighbor.
       1. Gambling always has a loser, even if it isn’t you.
       2. Large institutions and prizes hide the victims from you, but they are built on the loss and destruction of countless willing participants – your participation makes you guilty.

**Conclusion**

1. Let it not even be named among you – **Ephesians 5:3-7** – do not be deceived.
2. One cannot be a faithful Christian and gamble, or defend the practice – Tertullian said, “If you say you are a Christian when you are a dice player, you say what you are not, because you are a partner with the world.”