

Why I Do Not Gamble

As a Christian, I believe gambling is wrong. Many people, including those who claim to be Christians, want to know what is wrong with gambling. Sometimes I think, as Christians, we look at moral issues from the wrong angle. Instead of asking ourselves what is wrong with gambling, maybe we should be asking ourselves what is right with gambling. Is gambling a good work? Does it make me a better Christian? Does it help me teach others about Christianity and make them curious?

I believe every moral issue can be put into one of two categories: (1) works of the flesh or (2) the fruit of the spirit. Paul explained to the churches in Galatia that the flesh (worldly self) lusts against the spirit (spiritual self) and they are contrary to one another. In Galatians 5:19-26, Paul gives examples of works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. These are acts that we as Christians do not question because they are either blatantly discouraged or encouraged.

What about things that are not explicitly discouraged? Is it acceptable for a Christian to participate in such activities that are not in this list of works of the flesh? Verse 21 says, "and such like" which indicates this is not an all-exhaustive list of works of the flesh. Sometimes we must use our knowledge of God's Word to "discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

Which category should we place the act of gambling? Should it be under works of the flesh or fruit of the spirit? Let's explore what gambling produces in a Christian and determine if it fits in the category of fruit of the spirit:

- In Acts 20:35 Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Is gambling giving or receiving?
- In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon [material possessions]." Is gambling serving God or money?
- In Mark 12:31 Jesus said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Is gambling loving your neighbor or loving yourself more?
- In Matthew 7:12 Jesus said, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." When you take money from another by winning a game, is this something you like others doing to you?
- In Ephesians 4:38 Paul instructed Christians, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Does gambling require good honest labor that earns him money to give to the needy?
- In I Corinthians 10:24 Paul instructed Christians, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [good]." In addition, Paul said in Galatians 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens..." These verses indicate a Christian should be unselfish. Is gambling selfish or unselfish?
 - In I John 2:15-17, John taught Christians not to love the world or the things in the world, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Is gambling of the world?

So far, I am not seeing a good correlation between being a Christian and being a gambler. As a matter of fact, they seem to contradict each other. In addition, gambling does not appear to fit in the category of "fruit of the spirit" discussed in Galatians 5:22-26. Gambling does not produce love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness or temperance. Based on the above questions, gambling seems to produce a person who: (1) prefers to receive rather than give; (2) prefers serving money rather than God; (3) does not love their neighbor but would rather take his money; (4) would rather "do unto others before they do it to me;" (5) does not want to work hard for his money but would rather "hit it big;" (6) is very selfish; and (7) loves the world.

Is there a difference between gambling and investing in the stock market? They both contain elements of risk. Let's think about all the parties involved in both of these activities. In investing, there is the investor who contributes money into corporations by purchasing stocks and results in ownership of part of that corporation. The investor is in effect buying part of that corporation in hopes that the corporation does well and the investor will see a return on his investment. The other party in this transaction is the corporation itself. A corporation is an entity with no ulterior

motives. Jesus even used an example of investing in Matthew 25:14-30 and compared getting a return on a monetary investment to God getting a return on a Christian investment. We are to produce for the Lord just as our invested money produces a return for us. In gambling, there is the gambler who places money on a game with the very high risk of losing it all. Any money won by the gambler means a loss of money by someone else. The only thing a gambler is buying is a remote chance of winning. The other parties in this game are the casino owners who "sucker" people out of their money. Las Vegas is not a rich city because it pays out more winnings than it brings in--quite the opposite. In addition, I have never heard anyone call gambling a good investment.

If people stopped investing in the stock market, our economy and country would crumble. However, if people stopped gambling in the casinos, I believe our country would be taking the first step in returning to God.

I believe the issue of gambling can be summed up in Paul's instructions to Timothy in I Timothy 6:6-11, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 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. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." If this could not apply to gambling then I do not know what could. I believe it is quite clear that a Christian cannot be a gambler and be pleasing to God.

Finally, the question may arise, "Is it acceptable to buy a raffle ticket or bet on a football game or participate in other forms of seemingly harmless gambling?" My response to that is this. If we have established that gambling is not something a Christian should do, then why would it be acceptable to do in "small doses?" Sin is sin whether it is done on a small or large scale.