

Would God Vote for Gambling?



Don't **BET** on it!

by Gene McCoy

There seems to be a referendum on gambling every election cycle. It continues to be a matter to consider in the light of Scripture.

Gambling is the act of risking money or real property in a game of chance, or some contingency involving an uncertain outcome. Inherent in such activity is the putting at risk that which one has with the intent or desire of obtaining more, and that which belongs to someone else. Two sins, then, which necessarily underlie all gambling are greed and covetousness. This is the foundation upon which God's "NO" vote may be anticipated.

Another inherent aspect is that there is no real service or tangible good produced through the activity. For every winner, then, there must also be a loser. It is merely the exchanging of goods and property from an unfortunate fool to a lucky and exploitive winner.

It is greed that breeds the notion that you can get something for nothing; a basic motivation for gambling. This misconception is clearly exposed by the increased costs everyone in society pays for the social ills and criminal activity that accompany gambling. Theft to pay gambling debts increases the cost of goods and services for everyone. Taxes are assessed to provide added

law enforcement. Families left destitute by compulsive gamblers are rescued by social services provided by all taxpayers. Is gambling really a something for nothing proposition? All statistics testify to the contrary. After ten years of legalized gambling in Atlantic City, the number of people requiring services of Atlantic City Rescue Mission jumped from 15 to 500 a day.

Consider this issue from the standpoint of Christian ethics. It is an established fact that the majority of those who play the lottery, for instance, are those who can least afford to gamble. To the poverty stricken individual whose chances of advancement beyond minimum wage employment is not very promising, all hope of material prosperity is wrapped up in the lottery ticket purchased with money desperately needed to clothe and feed the family.

But, you ask, what does this have to do with me? I pay my bills and provide for my family. The point is that the principle of Christian love prohibits us from engaging in any activity that adversely affects others.

For every winner there must be a corresponding loser. The effect of gambling is that you, the

well-employed provider of your family's needs, are receiving your winnings from the pocket of thousands whose families are hungry and naked. The casino or lottery commission merely serves as the barrier preventing the gambler from seeing the faces of the exploited poor. Can the Christian thus honor the principle of benevolent love? We suggest that the Christian would honor the Lord by investing the money otherwise wasted on fleeting entertainment to purchase food and clothing for the poor people previously exploited. Rather than exploiting the hopelessness of the poor through the lottery, get personally involved with these people and give them the hope that we have in Jesus Christ! You may be able to employ their services and give them job training and experience, which could rescue them from a high stakes lifestyle. Demonstrating such love produces eternal satisfaction — a life of trusting Jesus instead of Chance.

Some will always object by saying that gambling is merely entertainment, that it is the same as plunking down \$50.00 for dinner at a posh restaurant or a night at the theater. Besides the clear differences already discussed (i.e., the exploitive nature of gambling, the absence of any service or good in return, etc.), there is still

the matter of greed to address.

It is an accepted fact that the gambler will not always win. But how many would gamble if they knew they would always lose?

It's the prospect of winning that motivates the gambler. If entertainment is the sole interest as opposed to winning, I invite you to my house to play my guaranteed NO WIN slot machine! Greed is the basis of all gambling.

Planting crops and buying insurance is risking money on an uncertain outcome, goes the argument. Does this not implicate everyone in farming and insurance? Not at all! In neither of these worthwhile endeavors is an unnecessary risk taken. There is no attempt to get something for nothing; no violation of the Biblical work ethic. No one loses through exploitive motives or practices. In both endeavors valuable goods and services are realized. There really is no valid comparison to be made.

Rather than promoting faith in God, gambling emphasizes trust in chance and luck. The Bible condemns covetousness and materialism — gambling thrives on it. Gambling destroys the Biblical teaching of stewardship by encouraging participants to gamble away resources. Gambling is contrary to the Biblical teaching regarding love for God and others. It seeks

personal gain through the losses of others. Gambling violates the principle of productive work (Eph. 4:28)

It is true that those who

lose their shirt in gambling do so as a result of their own choice to risk it. But this does not relieve the Christian of his responsibility of love

toward the irresponsible. To vote for legalized gambling is to promote two sins which the Bible clearly condemns — greed and covetousness. Upon this

basis, not to mention many other considerations, God's vote would undoubtedly be "NO" to gambling.