

## Why We Don't Gamble

by John Isaac Edwards

Gambling is widespread, and affects all ages of people.

- “Four in five Americans say they have gambled at least once in their lives. With the exception of Hawaii and Utah, every state in the country offers some form of legalized gambling. And today you do not even need to leave your house to gamble—all you need is an Internet connection or a phone” (*Scientific American*, Oct. 15, 2013).
- The Family and Social Services Administration Division of Mental Health and Addiction sponsored surveys of people in Indiana ages 12-20, 21-59, and 60+ years old to determine the extent of gambling in Indiana. The Survey Research Center at Indiana-Purdue University Indianapolis reported over half of 12 through 20 year olds, almost 90 percent of adults age 21-59, and about 80% of adults 60 or older have engaged in some sort of gaming or betting for money at some point in their lives.
- According to the National Council on Problem Gambling: “Approximately 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lives; 60% in the past year.” “2 million of U.S. adults are estimated to meet criteria for pathological gambling in a given year. Another 4-6 million would be considered problem gamblers...”
- In 2007, gambling activities

generated gross revenues (the difference between the total amounts wagered minus the funds or “winnings” returned to the players) of \$92.27 billion in the United States (American Gaming Association). With a population of 322 million, that translates to \$286.55 per person!

What is gambling? It is not playing games without stakes or wagers, planting crops, buying stock, purchasing insurance, or crossing the street. Gambling is defined as, “a. To bet on an uncertain outcome, as of a game or sporting event. b. To play a game for stakes, especially a game whose outcome is at least partly determined by chance” (*American Heritage Dictionary*). According to Gamblers Anonymous, “Gambling, for the compulsive gambler, is any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or ‘skill’ constitutes gambling.”

Gambling takes many forms: playing cards for money, betting on one’s personal skill (such as shooting pool or bowling), scratch-offs and pull-

tabs, betting on the sports teams, playing the lottery, betting on dog or horse races, playing dice, casino gambling, raffle tickets, slot machines, roulette, coin toss, FanDuel, and the list goes on.

Why we don’t gamble:

1) ***It Is An Illegitimate Enterprise.*** The Scriptures authorize three legitimate ways to obtain money or possessions from others: *compensation for labor* (Mt. 20:1-15; Lk. 10:7); *exchange of a commodity for something of value* (Gen. 23:15-16; Mt. 13:44-46); *a gift* (Lk. 15:12; Eph. 4:28). Gambling fits none of these.

2) ***It Is Covetousness And Greed.*** Covetousness is the strong desire for the possessions of another. Greed is the excessive desire to acquire material wealth. This is the essence of gambling! Paul taught, “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 have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

3) ***It Is Contrary to the Golden Rule and the Second Commandment.*** The Golden Rule: "...all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." (Mt. 7:12). The Second Commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mt. 22:39). One who loves his neighbor works no ill to him (Rom. 13:8-10). The gambler exploits his neighbor, seeking gain at his loss.

4) ***It Is Addictive.*** The toll-free problem gambling HELPLINE phone number and Gamblers Anonymous reveal how habit-forming gambling is. Gamblers Anonymous says, "Our Gamblers Anonymous experience seems to point to these alternatives: to gamble, risking progressive deterioration or not to gamble, and develop a better way of life....Does this mean I can't even participate in a little penny ante game or world series pool? It means exactly that. A stand has to be made somewhere, and GA members have found the first bet is the one to avoid, even though it may be as little as matching for a cup of coffee." Researchers led by Dr. Hans

Breiter of Massachusetts General Hospital reported, "Gambling produces a similar pattern of activity to cocaine in the cocaine addict." The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling said, "Teens are twice as likely as adults to become addicted to gambling." Paul said, "...I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12) and "...I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection..." (1 Cor. 9:27).

5) ***It Is Poor Stewardship.*** The odds of winning the Indiana Powerball Jackpot? 1 in 292,201,338. According to the United States Census Bureau, there are only 6,596,855 residents in Indiana! Odds of creating the perfect March Madness bracket? Less than 1 in 9.2 quintillion! We are to be faithful and wise stewards (Lk. 12:42). Would it be good stewardship for the manager of your money to risk it on a game of chance?

6) ***It Leads to All Kinds of Sin.*** *Neglect* — the home is robbed of time and provisions. *Abuse* — almost 20% of wife-abuse cases involve domestic tension from compulsive

gambling (*Georgia Council on Moral and Civic Concerns. Suicide*, — The National Council on Problem Gambling has estimated that one in five problem gamblers attempt to kill themselves. And much more!

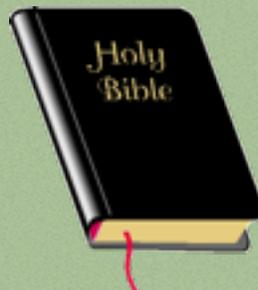
As an editorial in the Maryland Gazette published on January 17, 1750 says, "Nor is there any practice more detrimental to society, more productive of more pernicious consequences than the itch of gaming; for how can it be imagined, that person who is infected with this malady, should have the least regard for the welfare of the community, when his heart is bent upon plunder, his eye is blinded by the insatiate lust of avarice, and all his thoughts and desires terminate in that one object? This goads him on to corrupt the innocent, to inveigle the unwary, to forfeit his word, and absolutely disavow his conscience; hoping, by these fatal means, to be able to rifle the pockets of his companions, to enrich himself with the spoil, and to indulge his sensual appetites" (*Report On Legalized Gambling, Baltimore Criminal Justice Commission*).

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