

IS GAMBLING A SIN?

The Macmillan English Dictionary for advanced Learners defines gambling as an activity in you risk money in the hope of winning more money, if you are lucky or if you guess something correctly. Gambling involves playing games for money, taking risks for possible advantage of winning something or making undue profit.

Gambling takes various forms: card games, dice, betting on elections, betting on sports, buying tickets for raffle draws, slot casino machines pools, lottery ticket, cash tree etc.

The striking feature of gambling is that the happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser.

HISTORY OF GAMBLING

No one could state with certainty when gambling started, however many historians admitted that it is almost as old as human race. They noted that ancient Babylonians engaged in it as well as ancient Egyptians at least six (6) centuries before Abraham. Herodotus, father of history recorded that gambling was going on during his era. He lived about the same time as Ezra and Nehemiah of biblical fame. Gambling has a long checkered history among the nations of Africa and the American nations. Gambling in America has been around for a long time but has its heyday during the twentieth (20th) century.

WHY DO PEOPLE GAMBLE?

Some people gamble because of the thrill they receive from the uncertainty connected with it. The more this attitude pervades them the more gambling become a kind of incurable disease with them. Others gamble because of their strong desire to obtain something that belongs to another person.

IS GAMBLING SIN?

Although, the words “*Gambling*” and “*Gamble*” do not appear in the bible, we cannot assume that an activity is not sinful simply because it is not mentioned in the bible.

The bible does not say “*you shall not gamble or gambling is wrong*”, but it does teach us that while we might be free to do many things, all things are not profitable and we should not be brought under the control or power of anything other than the reign of Christ in our lives (*I Cor. 10:23, 6:12*).

WHY IS GAMBLING WRONG?

1. Gambling is wrong because it violates that teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ of “*Love your neighbour as yourself*” – *Matt. 22:39*. One cannot be said to love his neighbour when one is wickedly engaged in trying to win one’s neighbour’s house, money etc – *Jn, 13:34-35*.

2. Gambling is wrong because of the three evil motivations that keeps it going i.e. Covetous, greedy desire for gain at another's expense and selfish disposition. In **Romans 12:10**, Paul said, "*be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love...*"
3. Gambling is sinful because it goes against the work ethic, that we earn our daily bread by the sweat of our face (**Gen. 3:19**). Within the quietness of our own work, we are to eat our own bread (**II Thess. 3:12**). Gambling quenches the desire for honorable work.
4. Gambling also has the potential to turn into an addiction like drugs. This addiction can destroy the stability of the family, lead to job loss and cause a person to lose control of their life – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him (**II Pet. 2:19**).
5. Gambling provides a sense of false hope. Participants place their hope in winning and not in God. All through the bible verses, we are reminded that our hope is in God alone, not money power or position – **Ps. 62:5, I Tim. 6:17, Rom. 15:13**.
6. Gambling is sinful because it violates the biblical concept of stewardship and a steward is required to be faithful and honest (**I Cor. 4:1-2, Lk. 16:1,2**). Whatever has been entrusted to us by God, we are not to waste or squander it. The gambler is wasteful.
7. Gambling is wrong because it breeds dishonesty, deceit and immorality. It leads to lying, it leads to petty theft or robbery to pay off gambling debts. It leads to all kinds of evil in the society i.e. drunkenness, hard drugs etc.
8. Gambling is sinful because it sets an evil example before others. We are to be of that which is good (**I Tim. 4:12, Tit. 2:7-8**).
9. Gambling is wrong because it is about covetousness and selfishness. Jesus warns us to take heed and beware of covetousness for a man's life does not consist of the abundance of the things he has (**Lk. 12:15**). Covetousness, the very root of gambling is styled idolatry (**Eph. 5:3-5, Col. 3:5**).
10. Gambling is sinful because it has destroyed many marriages, destroyed homes. Many gamblers have lost their wives because of their compulsive habits of gambling.
11. One of the most significant sins of the gambling industry is its treatment of the poor. Rather than offering genuine hope and way out of poverty, gambling operators prey on those who are most desperate (the poor). The Old Testament's prophets proclaimed God's devastating judgment against those who 'devour' the poor and yet the gambling proponents entice those at the bottom of the economic ladder to risk everything though end up with nothing.

PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES TO JUSTIFY GAMBLING

Some contend that God approves of gambling by making reference to the following scriptures: **Num. 26:55** (assignment of tribal lands; **I Chron. 24:5** (office rotation)) and **Acts 1:26** (for the selection of Matthias by lot in the New Testament). All of these were done to know the mind of God – **Prov. 16:33**. They were not done for selfish benefit of the proponents. Lot or any other method used to make selection where the proponent wants to be seen to be unbiased and for fair to all.

CONCLUSION

Paul in his letter to the Philippians brethren charged them: *“Finally, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things – Phil. 4:8.* What can we say of gambling? Can we say it is of good report? No! On a final note – avoid gambling, it is as dangerous as a poisonous snake. It kills.

Bro. James Orhosere