

point, one first must realize that *everything* he does in life must be authorized by the Bible. Paul said, "Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 3:17). When we do something in the name of another, we are doing it by their authority (Acts 4:7). Thus, our actions as Christians must be rooted and grounded in the Word of God. In the Bible, there are only three ways a person can make money or receive goods. First, a person is authorized to make money by working for it (2 Thess. 3:10). Second, one may sell land or other goods and receive money for them (Acts 4:34; 5:1ff.). Third, one may trade food or other products for money or goods (Gen. 34:10; 42:34). The question then arises. Where does gambling fit into these three ways? It does not. Gambling is not honest work. It is based on chance. Gambling is not a selling/trading of lands or goods. It is actually stealing money from others. When all the facts are considered, it is evident that gambling is not an biblically sanctioned method of making money. Therefore, Christians must not participate in it (Rev. 22:18-19). May we strive not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6).

Gambling destroys the biblical design for the family. There are numerous examples of how children routinely suffer the most as a result of their parents' gambling problems. For example, in Indiana a review of the state's gaming commission records revealed that 72 children were found abandoned on casino premises during a 14-month period. In Louisiana and South Carolina, children died after being locked in hot cars for hours while their caretakers gambled. Another disturbing example shows the lengths to which gamblers will go to support their habits. An Illinois mother was sentenced to prison for suffocating her infant daughter in order to collect insurance money to continue gambling. Doesn't it turn your stomach when you consider how many children are being abandoned or mistreated so

their parents can go to the local casino to gamble? The family as God designed it is to be a place of love and happiness. It is designed to be a place where father and mother put each other first. It should be a place where children learn the fundamental values of life and what it means to love. When gambling comes into the family, the family begins a downward spiral of destruction. May God help us to speak out against gambling so that we can save the American family from destruction! Truly, gambling is *sin*!

Gambling is becoming more and more the plague of our society. We must realize that gambling is sinful and that God does not condone it. When the time comes to vote on gambling or to speak out against it, Christians should band together and condemn it with one unanimous voice. May each of us resolve never to gamble with our souls, and to help others not to gamble with theirs either.

# Are You Gambling With Your Soul?

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**E**li Bunch was a fairly average fellow—until he entered the world of gambling. It started with a small \$30 win. Then, he won \$3,000 with only a \$20 investment. After this, things went downhill quickly for Eli and his wife Jody. At the end of three years of gambling, Eli and Jody were in debt over \$250,000. Eventually, Eli lost a good job at a prominent business, Jody left him, and he lost his retirement (*Seattle Post*, February 2004). If you think Eli's story is sad, but that it could never happen to you, you are wrong. Eli started out as just a \$20, "once-in-a-blue-moon" type of gambler. He ended up a financially bankrupt man with a broken home and a ruined life. We must realize the terrible affect that gambling is having on our society and on our families. This tract is designed to answer two basic questions: (1) Should a Christian gamble?; and (2) Does the Bible sanction gambling? The Bible answers both questions with a resounding "No!" Let us consider several reasons why gambling is sinful.

When a person gambles, he is not a good steward of the things God has given him. The Bible says that every good and every perfect gift comes from God (Jas. 1:17). The Christian's responsibility is to use these gifts wisely (1 Pet. 4:10; Lk. 12:42). Gambling squanders God's gifts. The Bible teaches that all we have belongs to God (Hag. 2:8; Ps. 50:10-12). It is sad to see so many families lacking the basic necessities of life because a father or mother gambled away his or her paycheck. Gambling is a sin because it violates the biblical principle of good stewardship.

The gambler does not practice the Golden Rule. Jesus said, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also unto them" (Mt. 7:12). If I take someone else's money by gambling, then I am not fulfilling the Golden Rule. I do not want anyone to beat me out of my hard-earned money. Why, then, would I try to turn around and do it to someone else? A person cannot say that he loves his

neighbor, and then turn right around and try to beat him out of his money at gambling. The practice of gambling uses the Iron Rule ("Might makes right!") rather than the Golden Rule. Gambling is a sin because it violates the Golden Rule.

The practice of gambling breeds laziness and keeps people from making an honest living. The person who gambles builds his life around the hope that one day he is going to "hit it big" or "strike it rich." As a result of this thinking, gamblers often become lazy, dishonest, and a menace to society. The Bible says, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). I know people today who are selling their welfare check and their children's WIC stamps to go gamble. How sad! Gambling is a sin because it promotes laziness.

Gambling causes Christians to be addicted to evil practices. Gambling is rapidly becoming one of the most highly addictive and destructive problems in America. For example, studies show that in 2001 the "gross revenues from gambling were \$68.7 billion—more money than Americans spent on music, movies, spectator sports, video games, and theme parks combined" (Minnesota Department of Mental Health)! If we think gambling is *not* a problem, we better wake up! The National Council on Problem Gambling reported in March 2003 that over 80 percent of U.S. adults have reportedly gambled at least once in the past year. A recent study by the National Institute of Mental Health concluded that 4.2 million Americans are addicted to gambling, 60 percent of whom have yearly incomes under \$25,000. The number of problem gamblers in America is larger than the population of Los Angeles, California! Indeed, gambling is a serious *social* problem. Yet, it is an even more serious *biblical* problem. Let us consider three more reasons why gambling is a sin. The Christian should be able to say, "I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12). The Bible teaches that a Christian should not allow anything, except Christ, to control him (Rom. 6:16-18). The addictive nature of gambling violates the biblical teaching of self-control. If I am addicted to gambling,

I do not have control of myself because gambling controls me in certain ways. The Bible makes it amply clear that Christians must have control of themselves (Gal. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:6). Gambling is a sin because it causes Christians to be addicted to the wrong things.

Gambling sets an evil and worldly example. The Christian is called out of the world to serve God (2 Cor. 6:17-18). Jesus taught us to be good and shining examples to those around us (Mt. 5:16). Paul encouraged Timothy to be an example of faith to other believers (1 Tim. 4:12). One of the major problems with gambling is that a Christian cannot maintain a good example and be a gambler. Gambling is associated with such evil things as drinking, drugs, illicit sex, smoking, and reveling. If the Christian is to abstain from evil (1 Thess. 5:22), and if gambling is directly associated with evil (which it is!), how can a Christian gamble and still please God? Gambling is a sin because it ruins a Christian's example.

Gambling can cause dishonesty and deceit. Like the drug addict who has to rob the local store to get his next "fix," so the gambler may be led to commit crimes to get to the next poker table. For example, a *U.S. News & World Report* analysis found that *crime rates in casino communities are 84 percent higher than the national average*. An astonishing example of this type of dishonesty has been reported by Focus on the Family, which reported that a church secretary in Minnesota stole \$186,000 from the church for which she worked in order to finance her casino and lottery obsession. While this may be the exception rather than the norm, statistics show that crime and dishonesty go hand in hand with gambling. Christians should provide for things "honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). Gambling is a sin because it breeds dishonesty and deceit.

Gambling violates biblical principles about the manner in which a Christian can legitimately make money or receive goods. To understand this