

Gambling - It's A Bad Bet!

By Pastor David L. Brown, Ph.D.
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Introduction

If you took a survey and asked people what the most famous ship was, you would likely hear the names, the Titanic, Lucitania or Queen Elizabeth. If you asked people to name a famous president prior to the 20th Century you would probably hear a lot of Lincoln and Washington. But what would your answer be if I asked you to name a famous cow? The one that comes to mind is Mrs. O'Leary's cow. Many believe that the great Chicago Fire of 1871 was started when Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over a lantern. But did you know, there is another account of how the fire got started and many believe it is much more accurate. It seems that Mrs. O'Leary's son and his friends were in the barn, involved in a lively gambling game called craps. In all the excitement one of the shooters knocked over the lantern that started the fire. You could say, it was the hottest game in town. (From "Lady Luck's Companion" by Berger & Bruning; p 51).

The Pagan Origin of "GOOD LUCK"

"Good luck!" I suppose I have used this phrase hundreds of times. Many, over the years, have wished me the same. But, the origin of the phrase is associated with one of the oldest vices known to man -- GAMBLING. Here's the history...

The Romans worshipped a false goddess named FORTUNA. She was the goddess of FORTUNE & CHANCE. The Roman poet Juvenal wrote of her saying, *"Thou wouldst have no divine power if we were prudent."* The Romans thought she was so powerful that even the greater gods feared her whims. The Romans paid her great reverence holding festivals in her honor and even erecting several temples for her. One of those temples was called *Felicitas* which means "good fortune" or "good luck." Her name or the name of her temple was invoked to wish someone well who was gambling or taking a chance. It is plain to see "may Lady Luck be your companion" or "good luck" is a pagan expression and not a Christian one.

I was interested to read what 19th century historian Andrew Steinmetz said about the false goddess; *"Fortuna, a selfish creature who could be placated only by cards, counters, and dice, give birth to a 'misfigured child' known as 'Gaming. Then Gaming herself give birth to hideous twins. They were called Duelling and Suicide, and they became Gaming's constant companions."* (The word GAMING is a synonym for gambling). He's right. Twenty percent of compulsive gamblers attempt suicide and while gun fights are not the problem they were in the 1800's, at least two-thirds of compulsive gamblers turn to crime to finance their addiction

and the crime rate in gambling communities is nearly double the national average, according to U.S. News & World Report.

Gambling has long been recognized as a malignant sore on society. The Roman lawyer and satirist Juvenal (60-140A.D.) characterized it as a domineering vice of the foolish. Historian Steinmetz looked at gambling as a disfiguring, destructive vice, that often involved murder or suicide.

The Glorification of Gambling

Several years back Hollywood came out with a movie called, "THE GAMBLER." It included a song by that same name, sung by country singer Kenny Rogers. The song glorified the gambling. In the song, the "wise" old gambler shares his "wisdom." He says, I've "found an ace that I can keep." And what was that Ace? - - *"You gotta know when to hold'em, know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away, know when to run. You never count your money when you're sittin at the table. There'll be time enough for countin, when the dealin's done."* Unfortunately, the movie and song stimulated a lot of interest, especially among teen males, in gambling.

What about today? Gambling is more popular than ever. The get rich quick stories of those who win are headlines in the newspapers and the "top story" on the evening news. That is unfortunate, even tragic. In fact, when a state jumps into the gambling pig pen and starts rooting for the gambling revenues, big problems occur. *"The number of compulsive gamblers will increase between 100 and 550 percent when gambling is brought into an area,"* according to University of Illinois Professor John Kindt. The truth is, *"when gambling expands, so does the number of gambling addicts. It is estimated that close to 10 million Americans now have a gambling habit that is out of control—and the number is growing daily."*

The Historic Problems With Gambling

Any state that substitutes the "get rich quick" philosophy for industry and thrift is laying a cornerstone for moral and economic disaster. I can almost hear the critics say, *"Sounds just like a fanatic preacher, speaking against having a little harmless fun."* Well, perhaps you will consider A. R. Spofford, Librarian of Congress who wrote in 1892, *"Experiences of the past have crystallized into a general public conviction that LOTTERIES are to be regarded, in direct proportion to their extension, as among the most dangerous and prolific sources of human misery"* (Lotteries In American History by A. R. Spofford).

What caused Spofford to make such a statement? State after state who had instituted lotteries began to discover the same things that Pennsylvania discovered even before it was a state. In 1752 Penn-sylvania's Provincial Assembly banned lotteries, denouncing them as a public and common nuisance, stating in it's edict that they were *"introductive to vice, idleness and immorality; injurious to trade commerce and industry; and against the common good, welfare*

and peace of the province." Further, one of the worst fiascoes in history was the 1823 Congressionally mandated Grand National Lottery, which was instituted to finance road and canal improvements in Washington, D.C. Tickets sold well, but the government wound up holding an empty bag when after the agents who conducted the lottery ran off with every dime. The Supreme Court got into the act and demanded that the Government pay the winner the \$100,000 sweepstakes prize. By 1860 all states but Louisiana had banned state lotteries. In 1894 Louisiana finally outlawed their lottery after discovering that of the \$20 million dollars collected only \$40,000 found its way into the state treasury. **HOW TRAGIC THAT WE HAVE NOT LEARNED FROM HISTORY!** Many states are doomed to learn the hard way all over again. They will find that lotteries are not sound economic projects. They take money out of circulation, reduce purchasing power, divert money from legitimate investment, provide an unstable source of revenue and place an added burden on the low income families. Not only that, there are grave moral implications to boot!

My state has chosen to ignore history and add to the vice problems by promoting gambling (lottery, pari-mutuel betting and Indian casinos) as if it were a virtue. WHY? For the same reason Casanova promoted the lottery in the 1700's. MONEY! But who was Casanova? Have you ever heard someone being referred to as a "Casanova?" The name is used to refer to a ladies man or womanizer. But, there was an historical person by that name. His full name was Giovanni Jacopo (ya-ko-po) Casanova. He was a writer, womanizer, adventurer and gambler. At the height of his career, Casanova convinced the King of France to run a lottery to raise money to build a military academy. Casanova would supervise the lottery and deduct a percentage for his part. Cash prizes would be offered in a drawing and the king would get the rest for his project. It was very successful. The king was happy, the people were happy, and Casanova lined his pockets.

In fact, the reason my own state is in the gambling PIG PEN ROOTING is because they smell THE REVENUE! But, according to John Kindt's testimony before a hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business, *"for every \$1 the state receives in gambling revenues, it costs the state at least \$3 in increased criminal-justice, social-welfare and other expenses."* And that's not all! Legalized gambling is a messy business! It brings addiction (including adolescent addicts), family devastation, crime, poverty, government corruption and economic burdens.

The Definition of Gambling

Just exactly what is gambling? Here is the definition according to my dictionary: *gamble*, 1. to play at any game of chance for stakes, 2. to stake or risk money or anything of value, on the outcome of something involving chance: gamble on the result of a race, 3. to lose or squander by betting. The Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary adds, "to bet on an uncertain outcome."

The Three Elements of Gambling

The following three elements must be present for something to be defined as gambling...

1. **A PAY-OFF**
2. **THE ELEMENT OF CHANCE**
3. **THE STAKE (the money or article of value) RISKED BY THE BETTOR**

What Is And What Is Not Gambling

WHAT IS NOT GAMBLING

Giving of prizes is NOT gambling if you do not have to risk anything to get the prize. **Insurance** is not gambling. The purpose of insurance is to spread the liability and risk of accident, illness, injury or death around. Insurance does not create the risk. It is a universal risk that all people face. It is probably the most effective way of seeing that needs and expenses incurred, if such should happen, are able to be paid for. **Stock market** is not gambling. Gambling is generally a win or lose proposition. If you buy a lottery ticket, you either win or lose. In the stock market if you buy \$100 dollars worth of stock, generally your stock will go up or down, but you do not usually lose your entire \$100. Buying stock certainly is SPECULATING, but there is a difference between speculation and gambling. But, I think that those in the FUTURES MARKET may well be gambling, as they are betting that the prices of things will go up. If they go down, they have to pay the "margin" or difference. What about **Sweepstakes** and contests such as, the Readers Digest, Publishers Clearing House or supermarket contests? While not strictly gambling, *"many people get hooked on such gimmicks and the danger is that a false philosophy of financial gain is developed."* (Gambling; Dr. Kober, p 3).

WHAT IS GAMBLING

Many of us got our first taste of gambling on the school play-ground flipping baseball cards, playing marbles for keeps or pitching pennies. When mom found out I was playing odd or even with my marbles, she put an end to it quickly. That was gambling and that was not allowed in our family. But, that is small change compared to hard line gambling. Let's look at and define some categories of gambling...

Gaming – playing for money in any game of chance, such as slot machines, Roulette, bingo, craps, pay-off pinball machines, punch boards, dream books, chain letters, pyramid money games, poker, black-jack, etc.

Betting – staking money on an event which the outcome is doubtful. Examples are, horse or dog racing, cock or dog fights, tennis, hockey, football, basketball, hockey, baseball, pool, etc. You can bet on just about anything.

Lotteries – A lottery is the distribution of prizes by the drawing of lots. Most states run a variety of lotteries. Pick three and power-ball are among the most popular in our area.

Sweepstakes and Raffles – More than 50 countries around the world have sweepstakes, like the Irish Sweepstakes. Technically, a raffle is a lottery where each participant is buying a chance to win. If you buy a ticket or two for a good cause, with the purpose of it being a donation to a worthy organization, I do not see any problem with that.

Pools – A combination of betting and lotteries. The most popular is the check pool at work, though there are football pools, etc.

In summary, all the above are recognized as gambling because each clearly contains the three elements of gambling - 1) A payoff 2) The element of chance 3) The stake that is risked.

The Biblical Reasons To Reject Gambling

Historically, the Bible preaching church has long looked upon gambling as incompatible with the Christian life. Early Church pastor, Tertullian said, *"If you say that you are a Christian when you are a dice-player, you say you are what you are not, because you are a partner with the world."* (Money, Mania, Morals by L. Starkey Jr. p.35).

5 BIBLICAL REASONS TO REJECT GAMBLING

FIRST, GAMBLING IS IDOLATROUS

God commands us to live a life of faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Proverbs 3:5-6 makes that clear. We are under God's providential care. When a person gambles, the focus is all together different. The focus shifts to LUCK, CHANCE & FORTUNE. A careful study of Isaiah 65:11-12a makes it clear that God abhorred that kind of behavior then and he abhors that kind of behavior now.

SECOND, GAMBLING IS STEALING

"The gains of the winners are paid at the expense of the losers. In winning, one receives the wages that another person has earned without giving anything in exchange." (Gambling, Kober; p.2 & 8). Just because it is robbery by consent does not make it right. Gambling is nothing more than sophisticated stealing. Ephesians 4:28 says *"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."*

The late Dr. M. R. DeHann said, *"Gambling is morally wrong, for its expressed purpose is to obtain material gain apart from honest, productive toil, and at the expense of one's neighbor! In fact, it is little more than refined stealing! One*

cannot truly love his neighbor as himself and still seek to practice such robbery by consent."

THIRD, GAMBLING IS BASED ON COVETOUSNESS

Gambling is an attempt to get something for nothing twisted by the willingness to take a risk. It is the desire to "get rich quick" without working for it. The desire to gamble is fueled by the love of money and we know *"the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil"* (I Timothy 6:10). Note the rest of the verse, *"...which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*

We are warned about the "something for nothing" and the "get rich quick" craving in the Bible. Proverbs 10:4 says *"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."* Again Proverbs 28:20 & 22 says *"A faithful [honest] man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."* Finally, Proverbs 13:11 says *"Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase."* One writer paraphrased it this way – *"Wealth from gambling quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows."*

FOURTH, GAMBLING IS POOR STEWARDSHIP OF WHAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO YOUR CARE

I Corinthians 4: 1-2 says, *"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. More-over it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."* I believe *"to risk money haphazardly in gambling is to completely disregard the Biblical truth that our possessions are a trust for which we must someday give full account to God!"* (M. R. DeHaan) Mississippi riverboat gambler, George Devol, used to like to trick ministers into betting against him. They would always lose and then Devol would give them their money back accompanied by this advice: *"Go and sin no more."* Friends, that is good advice for us today!

FIFTH, GAMBLING IS ADDICTIVE

I Corinthians 6:12 says *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* There is only one thing that is to be in control of the believer's life and that is THE HOLY SPIRIT (Ephesians 5:18). There is no doubt that gambling is addictive. It "gets in your blood". Edgar Allan Poe was a compulsive gambler and so was famous gambler, Nick the Greek (Nicholas Andrea Dandolos). He won as much as \$50 million in a single night. By his account, he went from rags to riches and back again 73 times in his life. During his life time he won and lost more than \$500 million. He died broke, on Christmas day in 1966.

Time will not permit me to go any further, but there are other problems with gambling. Here are just a few -- It increases crime, corrupts government, causes

family problems, depresses legitimate business, increases welfare costs, produces human desperation and produces a wrong attitude toward work.

If you want more information, I suggest you write for the following –

One-Armed Bandits on the Rise: Will Wisconsin continue to expand gambling?; Family Research Institute • 123 E. Doty St, Ste 206 • Madison, WI 53703-3321 • (608) 256-3370 (I suggest you send \$1.00 with your request. This is a one page report front & back)

What Payoff Can You Expect From Gambling?; Focus On The Family • Colorado Springs, CO 80995 • Item # FC067 • 1-800-A-Family • 25 brochures for a suggested donation of \$5.00

Gambling: A Bad Bet by Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe; Published by Fleming H. Revell • Available through Focus On The Family • Colorado Springs, CO 80995 • Item # BP002 • Suggested Donation \$8.00

Available From

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A **U.S. News & World Report** analysis found crime rates in casino communities to be 84% higher than the national average.

Domestic violence and child abuse increase dramatically when gambling comes to an area.

University of Illinois economist Earl Grinols has calculated that 52% of casino revenues come from active problem and pathological gamblers.

Teens are three times as likely as adults to become addicted to gambling once exposed & at least 1 in 10 teens engages in illegal activity (stealing, shoplifting, selling drugs, or prostitution) to finance their gambling.

The National Council on Problem Gambling reports that one in five pathological gamblers attempts suicide – a higher rate than that of any other addictive disorder.

For every \$1 the state receives in gambling revenues, it costs the state at least \$3 in increased criminal-justice, social-welfare and other expenses.