



## Moral Issues *Gambling*



There are some issues of morality not specifically mentioned in Scripture. The word “gambling” will not be found in the Scriptures. At the time the Scriptures were written, no slot machine had been invented, Las Vegas had not been founded and state lotteries were not much of an issue since there were no United States to have a state lottery! So, the Christian must look to principles of Scripture to determine whether participating in such is right or wrong. Consider a few Bible principles and examples to help us discern whether gambling is good or evil.

**The Bible condemns greed.** One of the motivating factors behind gambling is greed. Gambling commercials flash dollar signs all across the screen and cause one to think how wonderful it would be to be rich without having to work for it. Commercials do not show the gambling addict who has drained his bank account or lost his house because of his insatiable greed. Advertisements never portray the man whose friends will not answer the phone because they know he is going to hit them up for money only to gamble it away. The “desire to be rich” is not commended in Scripture but condemned (1 Timothy 6:9). Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). The treasures we should want to heap up are of a spiritual, not material nature (Matthew 6:19-21). Make no mistake—at the heart of gambling is a competitive desire for money!

**The Bible demands honest labor from the able-bodied.** God’s plan for your financial stability is not rolling the dice, it is work. Proverbs 14:23 says, “In all labor there is profit. But idle chatter leads only to poverty.” Idle chatter about winning the lotto jackpot will get you as far as an idle car—nowhere. Hard work is more likely to grant financial profit. Over and over again the Scriptures demand honest labor from Christians (cf. Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Titus 3:8,14). The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was a lady constantly busy and working. She would never have a nickname “lady luck” but “lady work.” In fact, the last verse of the chapter says, “...let her own works praise her in the gates” (31:31). Do you think she would be as virtuous if her daily activities included “scratching the ticket, playing cards, rolling dice or standing at the slot machine.” Think again.

**The Bible condemns stealing.** Some like to claim gambling is not stealing because others “mutually consent” to play. Follow this line of logic for a moment. Is it okay to commit fornication as long as there is “mutual consent” between both parties? Is it okay to murder in a duel because there was “mutual consent” to a shootout? Is it okay to commit adultery if there is “mutual consent” between all parties? Likewise, is it okay to take someone’s money just because there was “mutual consent” to the bet? Whether by “mutual consent” or not we steal from

others when we take something which we did not earn by inheritance or honest labor (Ephesians 4:28)! Love for our neighbor demands a desire to help him, not take from him (Matthew 22:39). The Golden Rule demands we treat others as we would want to be treated (Matthew 7:12).

**The example of Samson displays the fruit of gambling.** Samson provides us with an Old Testament example of gambling. Samson makes a wager with the Philistines based upon a riddle (Judges 14:10-20). In just one week, we see the negative effects his foolish wager had upon a community.

For Samson, the wager was made in pride. He had a “good feeling” about this riddle and never dreamed he would lose. Sounds like the typical gambler and like the typical gambler, Samson lost a lot more than a bet.

For the Philistines, the wager led to crime. They blackmailed Samson’s wife, threatened her family and encouraged her to manipulate Samson into revealing the answer. In every community, gambling always brings with it an increase in crime.

For Samson’s wife, she was left with a tarnished reputation, a ruined husband and a family at war with Samson. In most cases, gambling does not bring peace to the family as it is a risk with dangerous consequences.

Greed. Dishonest labor. Theft. Evil fruits. Does this sound like something God would encourage? *Joshua R Welch*