

Is Gambling A Bad Bet For Society?

By Stanley Kilgore

John 19:23-24:

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

Contrary to what many people believe, the Bible does indirectly address the issue of gambling. While it contains no "thou shalt not gamble," it does contain many insights and principles that indicate that gambling is wrong. You might ask, "If gambling is wrong, why doesn't the Bible plainly condemn it?" I think that is a valid question and one that deserves an answer. The main reason gambling is not openly condemned in the Bible is because it, like smoking, was not a social problem. Even though the Roman soldiers gambled over the seamless robe of Jesus, gambling was not a social problem like it is today. I want to share with you three factors concerning the subject of gambling.

I. The People Who Say That Gambling Is Good For Society

Who are the real proponents of gambling? There are too many for me to mention them all. But I do want to briefly mention some that most of us will quickly recognize. First, politicians who are looking for more revenue to spend are for gambling. I am not surprised by this fact. Politicians are always looking for more money because they have failed to manage what we have already given them. Every election year many politicians mention the gambling issue as a means for raising more revenue. I would like to ask them what happened to the famous horse track (and now dog track) in Birmingham and all the revenue that it was suppose to bring into our economy. It was suppose to pump thousands into our school system. Now we hear that a State run lottery is the answer to our education problems. Given the past record of our politicians, we had better be careful as to who we listen too. The Birmingham horse track/dog track never reached the expectations of its supporters and neither will a state run lottery. Second, those who are involved in crime are for gambling. There is documented proof that legalized gambling increases illegal gambling and brings more crime into a community. Police are usually the immediate targets of this corrupt system since they are at the entry point of the criminal justice system. Third, wealthy business people looking to capitalize on the poor are for gambling. Those who own motels, restaurants, and food suppliers are usually for gambling when it brings people into the state or their community.

II. The Problems That Suggest That Gambling Is Bad For Society

It's important that I state why I think gambling is a bad bet for society. First, let's consider the problems of gambling. (1) Gambling hurts the family. Gambling hurts not only those directly involved, but innocent people as well, especially children. Gambling creates financial problems and special tension in the home. It is difficult to tell which is harmed worse by the plague of gambling: the children, spouse, or the gambler himself. (2) Gambling destroys communities. Local businesses lose customer dollars because many are buying lottery tickets. (3) Gambling preys upon young people. Researchers are now calling gambling the fastest growing teenage addiction, with the rate of pathological gambling

among high school and college-age youth about twice that of adults. (4) Gambling contributes to crime and corruption. This is especially true for casinos gambling. Casinos gambling will be just around the corner if a state run lottery is approved.

Second, let's consider the practice of gambling. Will a state run lottery be a bad bet for the people of Alabama? I want to say a loud YES and state some reasons why I believe this. (1) A lottery is bad for our state because it will divert dollars from goods and services to tickets. Most retail merchants are appalled at the flow of dollars away from their merchandise. Even some of the smaller stores like Circle K and Safeway don't want to handle the lottery tickets but feel they must because the store down the road does it. (2) A lottery is a bad bet for our state because it forces the state to become a bookie. The purpose of government as ordained by God is to serve and protect the people (Rom.13:1-7). Taxation is a legitimate method for government to raise funds for it's operating expenses (Mt.22:31). When a state decides to legalize gambling to supplement its tax revenue, government is transformed from a protector of its citizens to a retailer that must convince its customers (citizens) it must buy its products (gambling). (3) A lottery is a bad bet for our state because the lottery creates new gamblers. People who would never gamble at a casino are drawn into regular and frequent gambling habits because lottery tickets are so easy to purchase. (4) A lottery is a bad bet for our state because it is an unpredictable source of state revenue. Many promises are made concerning the lottery and most remain unfulfilled. A state is much better off with a reliable source of tax revenue.

III. The Principles That Support That Gambling Is Wrong For Society

I want to close by giving you several principles that every Christian ought to consider if they are not sure that gambling is wrong. I ask you to prayerfully consider these truths. First, gambling copies the wicked soldiers that crucified Christ. We learn from John 19:23-24 that the object for which people gamble over is not necessarily sin. The expensive garment of Jesus was not sinful. Just like the dogs, horses, or lottery tickets themselves are not sinful. It is not the object of gambling that is sinful but the action. Second, gambling is an attempt to get something without working for it. The Bible stresses the importance of work (2 Thes.3:10-11; Eph.4:28). Third, gambling becomes addictive to the gambler. The only power that we should be under is that of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us, "All things are lawful (permitted) unto me, but all things are not expedient (beneficial); all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor.6:12). Fourth, gambling associates you with the wrong people. I am reminded of what God tells us in His Word. 1 Thes. 5:22- "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Cor. 15:33- "Evil communications corrupt good manners. Fifth, gambling is the opposite of faith. God expects His children to walk by faith not by chance. We cannot please God unless we are willing to walk by faith. Christians are to put their trust in God for financial resources, not in blind fate such as gambling. Sixth, the Bible promotes good stewardship, which is the opposite of gambling. Gambling undermines the principle of good stewardship. Ultimately all things belong to God and we are his stewards (Ps.24:1). Seventh, the Bible promotes Christian influence in opposition to gambling. Gambling hinders one's Christian influence. If your pastor gambled, would your admiration and appreciation for him decline? I believe your answer would be yes!

I am sure by now it is obvious that I am against gambling. It undermines our values, mocks work, finances crime, robs children, enslaves people, and poisons whatever it touches. It's time for God's people to take a stand for the things that will build stronger communities. Let's tell others that a state run lottery is a bad bet for Alabama.

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