

# Moral Issues: Gambling

by Rob Harbison

1 Timothy 6:9-11

INTRO: Horse racing, lottery, church bingo, casino nights, carnival games, raffles for charity—when it comes to gambling, we've got it all! And when it comes to determining the morality of gambling, we have more defenses that confuse the issue than we have convictions that clarify it!

A simple definition of gambling would be "desiring the possession of another (a prize) the gambler creates a risk (losing his own) in an attempt, through chance, to gain the other person's possession with nothing to give in exchange." Sometimes the stakes are high, sometimes they are low, but the principle remains the same.

To justify gambling, many people say things like "Life is a gamble... A farmer planting a crop each year is a gamble... Every time you drive a car is a gamble... Buying a used car is a gamble." No...leaving home in a car is a risk... making a wager on that risk is gambling! There is a certain amount of risk inherent in all activities, but the mere presence of risk does not make it a gamble!

Gambling is different. When gambling thrives, someone else suffers! Lost in the glitter of the multimillion dollar winner are all the millions of losers. The winner won at the expense of the loser—that is not hardly the same thing as planting a crop every year—let's be honest!

Wading through all our rationalizations and defenses, what does the Bible say about gambling?

## I. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GAMBLING?

A) Honorable Ways Of Exchanging Money. It speaks of legitimate, honorable ways of transferring things of value.

1) There is the law of labor, earning money for the labor expended (Ephesians 4:28).

2) There is the law of exchange, where a commodity is exchanged for its value in money or something equivalent (Proverbs 31:16).

3) There is the law of love, where money or gifts are given in love without expectation of something in return (Luke 14:12-14).

4) Gambling comes under none of these principles—actually it is the very opposite of them!

B) Gambling Is The "Love Of Money." In its rawest form, "But those who desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness..." (1 Timothy 6:9-11).

C) Gambling Is Covetousness. It is an inordinate desire to get something without a legitimate exchange. It has no intention of giving something of comparable value in return "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience." (Colossians 3:5-6).

D) Gambling Is Stealing By Consent. Just like dueling is murder by consent, and an affair is adultery by consent. Consent is not a good gauge of its rightness or wrongness, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." (Ephesians 4:28). The willingness of a person to participate in an activity does not determine whether or not it is right!

E) Gambling Breaks The "Golden Rule." It does not attempt to do something for another, but to take something from another, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12). How many people would continue to gamble if they were guided by that ethic? In gambling, if one is able to secure another's money or goods by skill or chance, then it is just his neighbor's tough luck!

F) Gambling Breaks The Second Greatest Commandment. That is the law of love (Matthew 22:39). You cannot take what rightfully belongs to another because of some wager, on account of love, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "...You shall not steal... You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:8-10).

**CONCLUSION:** When gambling thrives someone suffers. Remember that "legal" and "moral" are not necessarily the same thing! If gambling is wrong in principle, then neither the amount gambled or the reason for gambling is relevant.