

What Does the Bible Teach About Playing the Lottery?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

I. DEFINITIONS

A. Gambling - "To play a game for money or other stakes, to hazard or wager money or other valuables on the outcome of an uncertain event" (Webster's New International Dictionary)

B. Lottery - "A contest in which tokens are distributed or sold, the winning token being secretly predetermined or ultimately selected in a chance drawing" (Webster's New College Dictionary)

C. "In 2012, Florida was the third-ranked state in yearly lottery revenue with \$4.45 billion; revenue passed \$5 billion in fiscal year 2013. Florida passed the legislation to enact the lottery in 1986 by a two to one ratio. The new lottery was spearheaded by Governor Bob Martinez and the Florida legislature with the mission of maximizing revenues for the enhancement of public education in Florida. The lottery was founded on the basis that it would provide the people of Florida the opportunity to benefit from additional revenues while providing the highest quality games available. The lottery's first game, MILLIONAIRE was a \$1 scratch-off that was popular. Within 17 days, the scratch-off game had paid back the entire \$15.5 million investment to the state's general fund. Florida currently offers ten games: Cash4Life, Mega Millions, Powerball, Florida Lotto, Pick 2, Pick 3, Pick 4, Pick 5, Fantasy 5, and Jackpot Triple Play.

"With the goal of the Florida Lottery being to enhance public education in the state, in the 2011-12 fiscal year, the Florida Lottery donated \$1.31 billion to the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund, surpassing the \$1 billion mark for the eleventh time in its history and expanding its all-time donation total to over \$25 billion. The law stipulated that 50% go to prizes, 38% go to education, and the remaining 12% used for lottery administration and promotion. Within a few years, the legislature began to subvert the original intent. In the state budget, they began to use lottery money designated to pay for education operating costs and salaries shifting it to pet projects and non-educational spending. Lottery funding of education is now less than 8% of the state's education budget. (Wikipedia)

1. This has been the case with every lottery in every state that has a lottery. It is a state sanctioned con game that takes money from people who can least afford it; a tax on people who are bad at math.

D. "Play responsibly"? It is not possible for a Christian to do so.

II. GOD'S LAWS OF EXCHANGE

A. God has decreed that humankind should prosper in only seven ways:

1. Honest labor - Eph. 4:28
2. A gift - Matt. 7:11
3. Discovery of unclaimed property - Matt. 13:44
4. Benevolence - Acts 2:44-45
5. Honest barter, business or exchange - James 4:13
6. Prudent investment - Matt. 25:27
7. Inheritance or reward - Rom. 8:16-17

- B. These are the only means spoken of favorably in God's word.
 - 1. The lottery and gambling is not among them.

III. TWELVE REASONS WHY PLAYING THE LOTTERY IS A SIN

- A. Not specifically mentioned in the scriptures, but then neither is mail fraud, draft dodging, smoking marijuana, and Internet pornography.
 - 1. Gal. 5:19-21; 1Cor. 6:9-10 - it is a work of the flesh.
- B. It involves idolatry - Eph. 5:5
 - 1. A perceived shortcut to getting money and satisfying greed.
 - 2. To the addicted gambler, gambling is worship and the casino is his temple.
- C. It involves covetousness.
 - 1. 1John 2:15-17 - Lust of the eye
 - 2. Wants what the other person has without fair return
 - 3. Greed is the primary motivate behind gambling. Look at the lines at the lottery machines when the Powerball goes above 100 million dollars?
 - 4. What would happen to gambling business if there was no greed?
- D. Gambling is a form of stealing by consent - Eph. 4:28
 - 1. Theft is taking that which another does not wish to surrender.
 - 2. "They give their consent." Then why don't they just hand their money to the game operators or the state lottery commission?
 - 3. Dueling is murder by agreement; does that make it acceptable?
 - 4. Fornication takes place between consenting adults; does that make it moral?
- E. Violates God's command to work - 2Thes. 3:10
 - 1. Since the gambler does not labor scripturally for his gains, he is numbered among those who do not deserve to eat.
- F. Gambling bears evil fruit.
 - 1. Matt. 7:16-20 - It greatly contributes to proliferation of evil in the world.
 - 2. "Casino gambling has triggered a vice explosion of epic proportions" (Story on Atlantic City in Wall Street Journal, 8/7/85)
 - 3. Organized crime, prostitution, and drug trafficking is in higher proportion near gambling centers.
 - 4. Broken homes, stealing, embezzlement, murder, addiction, poverty, and lifetime debt follow gambling where ever it goes.
 - 5. Preys on the elements of our society who can least resist and can least afford it. The lottery is a tax on the poor and ignorant.
- G. Gambling enslaves the participant.
 - 1. 1Cor. 9:27, 6:12
 - 2. The Christian is in control of himself, and does not surrender that control to anyone or anything, except God and His word.
 - 3. Gambling ensnares and addicts the weak. Simple forms of risk games frequently lead to worse forms of gambling. It is a gateway sin that leads to other sins: stealing, embezzlement, and fraud.
- H. Gambling violates the Golden Rule - Matt. 7:12.
 - 1. Who gambles hoping his opponent will win?

- I. Gambling violates the nature of love - 1Cor. 13:4-7.
- J. Gambling manifests distrust in God's promise to care for us - Matt. 6:33.
- K. Gambling is a misuse of stewardship - 1Cor. 4:2.
 - 1. Rule of house percentage: the odds always favor the house.
- L. Gambling puts one with evil companions - 1Cor. 15:33

IV. ANSWERING EXCUSES

- A. "Life is a gamble." (Sophistry based on semantics)
 - 1. Life does not require that one take artificially generated risks, nor wager on the outcome of a necessary risk.
- B. "I just don't see the harm." (Subjective and prejudiced observation)
- C. "It's money I can afford to lose."
 - 1. No amount of covetousness is affordable.
 - 2. If you can afford to lose it, then why not just give it away?
- D. "Proceeds are used for a good cause."
 - 1. "Keeps taxes lower; helps senior citizens; funds education; pays for youth programs and education."
 - 2. Does the end justify the means? - Rom. 3:8
 - 3. Why not just donate your money or the prize if you win, or simply volunteer to pay extra taxes for these causes?
 - 4. Because the motivation is covetousness and greed, not generosity or charity.
- E. "It's legal now."
 - 1. So is fornication, homosexuality, divorce for any cause, drinking, using marijuana, viewing pornography, etc.
 - 2. Since when do government's standards determine Christian behavior?
- F. "Nearly everyone does it."
 - 1. The majority is headed for perdition, too - Matt. 7:13-14
- G. "I only gamble in small amounts."
 - 1. That's like saying: "I only steal things under five dollars."
 - 2. If it is a sin, then the degree or amount does not matter.
- H. "I just like a friendly bet to make it interesting."
 - 1. Casual sin is still sin.

Conclusion:

- A. The lottery is a sin, whether \$50 or 50¢.
- B. Christians have been called out of darkness into the light of God's word, and they need to shun the evil they left behind.
- C. You cannot gamble without:
 - 1. Covetousness (a sin)
 - 2. Envy (a sin)
 - 3. Wanting your opponent to lose his stake (a violation of the command to love your neighbor)
 - 4. Wagers, risks, stakes (violations of the principle of stewardship)
- D. Ecc. 5:18, 20