

A DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR YOUR CHURCH

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS ON GAMBLING

LOYALTY | LOVE | STEWARDSHIP | WORK | INFLUENCE

By Weston Ware
Edited by Jana Jackson

Biblical truth is essential to discernment about gambling. The first reference to gambling in the Bible is found in Isaiah 65:11: “But you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny” (ESV). The deities mentioned here, Fortune and Destiny, were pagan gods of fate. Isaiah’s protest was against those who trusted in false gods of chance rather than in God. Although the Bible does not have a direct commandment explicitly prohibiting gambling, several teachings in scripture, when looked at collectively, make a powerful case against gambling and any view that trivializes it.

©Stop Predatory Gambling Texas, 2018.



We believe in improving the lives of Texans by freeing us from the lower standard of living, exploitation, and fraud that commercialized gambling spreads.

P.O Box 843
Arlington, TX 76004
spgtexas01@gmail.com

Biblical Insight 1: Loyalty

Gambling elevates financial gain to a dominant place in a person's life. It runs counter to Jesus' insistence that we cannot worship both God and money (Luke 16:13). Even a small-time gambler or occasional bettor contributes to a pattern of greed and worship of the false god of money. This idolatry of money replaces a person's loyalty to God, family and neighbors. On the other hand, scripture reveals the joy of contentment when we depend on God instead of money: "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Proponents of legalized gambling may plead for what they call freedom and progress or trivialize gambling as simply recreation or entertainment. They might urge us to resign ourselves to the inevitable. "People will always gamble," they say, "so why not legalize it and tax it?" Behind all these arguments lies the economic self-interest of the pro-gambling groups. Blind loyalty to financial gain at the expense of the common good rips apart the social fabric of a community, wastes paychecks, and fractures family life.

Preoccupation with material gain ignores biblical warnings against greed.

Biblical Insight 2: Love

The greatest commandment centers on love—love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Love refuses to engage in actions that exploit others. What does gambling do to our love for God and for others? Love is violated when personal pleasure and profit are gained at another's pain and loss. In other

Love refuses to engage in actions that exploit others.

er words, your winnings are at the expense of another person's loss. Conversely, your loss is another person's gain. Gambling, therefore, weakens the foundations of responsible community life.

Love requires that we recognize and attempt to meet the needs of others. Gambling, with its inherent exploitation of others, ignores the nobler qualities of humanity such as reason, justice, compassion, and responsibility. Love, on the other hand, builds up these qualities instead of tearing them down.

Talk about it:

- What is the relationship between gambling and idolatry?
- How does gambling exploit relationships?
- How can gambling sabotage God's ideal for family life?

Biblical Insight 3: Stewardship

Wealth is not in itself evil, but it may enable sin if the wealthy person becomes covetous and uses his or her money without reference to God's intention. Ultimately, all things belong to God, including our money (1 Corinthians 10:26). The recognition that God owns all the things in this world is the beginning of good stewardship—a right relationship to things. Good financial stewardship means we manage our money according to biblical principles which include:

- Providing for our basic needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
- Providing for our families (1 Timothy 5:8).
- Contributing to the Lord's work (1 Corinthians 16:1-3).
- Meeting human needs (Ephesians 4:28).
- Giving to the poor (John 13:29).
- Paying taxes (Matthew 22:21).

Handling our money according to biblical principles precludes gambling. Honest work and honest wages go together, for "the laborer deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). The Lord of the harvest will deal sharply with those who deviate from His stewardship principles.

The recognition that God owns all the things in this world is the beginning of a right relationship to things.

Biblical Insight 4: Work

Work is related to creativity. It is sharing in God's activity in the world. When God gave the first humans the task of tending the garden, he instituted work as a divine command (Genesis 1:28). The able person who refuses to work has no right to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Idleness, so the apostle Paul reasons, is a form of sin because it repudiates work, the divinely-appointed way of providing for one's household (1 Timothy 5:8). Thus, one's employment must agree with the purpose of God and be part of the world's needed work. Some forms of work are socially and morally degrading and, therefore, inconsistent with the divine intention of God. Instead, work that pleases God is fulfilling and engenders self-respect. It signifies the essential nature of God as a worker (John 5:17).

Work that pleases God is fulfilling and engenders self-respect.

a form of sin because it repudiates work, the divinely-appointed way of providing for one's household (1 Timothy 5:8). Thus, one's employment must agree with the purpose of God and be part of the world's needed work. Some forms of work are socially and morally degrading and, therefore, inconsistent with the divine intention of God. Instead, work that pleases God is fulfilling and engenders self-respect. It

Talk about it:

- How does the recognition that God "owns" your money change the way you use it?
- Many people justify their gambling by saying it is just "entertainment." How can gambling as simply entertainment hurt families and communities?
- Can gambling cheat a person out of the fulfillment God intended for them through honest work? How?

Biblical Insight 5: Influence

Christians are told to “abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Our avoidance of evil ensures that we will have a positive influence on community life. The young, the weak, the aging, and the needy among us are to be protected. Influence and power are not to be exploited for personal gain. Influence at its best is a moral force that overcomes evil and works for the common good.

The young, the weak, the aging, and the needy among us are to be protected.

Gambling contributes nothing to the common good. Instead, it undermines values, mocks work, finances crime, robs families, enslaves its addicts, and subverts governments.

Biblical insights lead followers of Christ to reject gambling’s false promises and say “no” to gambling.

Talk about it:

- In what ways do you influence your family? Your friends? Your community?
- How could gambling, or its results, undermine your Christian influence?
- How can someone take the money they might have used for gambling to promote the common good of their family or community?

Download this discussion guide: <http://texansagainstgambling.com/resources>.

