

Perspective - Does the Bible Say Anything About Gambling?

Sorry, but there are no Bible texts that directly speak about gambling. However, there are a number of scripture texts that address the principles involved¹.



Here are some:

The 10th commandment found in Exodus 20:17 talks about coveting which is the root of most of our problems. What is one of the reasons that people gamble and play the lottery? They covet money, quick and easy. 1 Timothy 6:10 declares that "the love of money is the root of all evil." Therefore, the enticement of gambling and playing the lottery obviously comes under these texts. But there is more. God has given to each person certain talents, which among other things includes time, money, influence and a host of other related items. He is going to have each person give a strict account of how these were used. If they are wasted and dissipated, often the indulgent ones are not the only ones who pay the price. Families often must go without basic necessities because of one member's addiction.

Matthew 6:21 quotes Christ as saying "where your treasure is there will your heart be also." For those who engage in this traffic, money is the mutilator. In the parable Jesus told of the rich farmer. He condemned him for saying how rich he was and that he would tear down his barns and build larger ones. You recall that the story ends with the man dying that very night. Then whom will this wealth belong to?

As you know, some churches countenance bingo and lotteries as a means of raising money for charitable purposes. Yet, most conservative Christians frown upon gambling of any kind, be it lotteries, slot machines, horse or dog racing, the Irish sweepstakes, roulette wheels, poker, bridge, or flipping a coin to see who pays for the soda. Why? Matthew 7:16 says, "by their fruits you shall know them."

What are the fruits of gambling? Revenue and jobs are two arguments frequently advanced in favor. Yet, when Tom Dewey was governor, he addressed the NY legislature as follows: "the entire history of legalized gambling in this country and abroad shows that it has brought nothing but poverty, crime, and corruption, demoralization of moral and ethical standards, and ultimately a lower living standard and misery for all the people." A gambler can become just as addicted to his bewitching pastime as the alcoholic does to his liquor or the drug addict to drugs.

A guiding principle and a truth that once perceived grips the heart is that both one's time and money belong to God. "You are bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:20) Consider the parable of the talents where the owner gave one servant 5, another 3 and the last got 1. The last man hid his talent in the earth. The owner rebuked him. How much sterner would have been the reproof if he had gambled it away? If your time and money were your own, we could say, "gamble all you please, it's your own business." But to gamble with money that is not your own, to waste time that is not your own, makes one anything less than a thief in God's sight. And the Bible does say that a thief will not get to heaven. 1 Corinthians 6:9,10.

¹ www.bibleinfo.com/en/category/keywords/gambling

This is an interesting statement: "One has 1 chance in 10 million of winning the state lottery in California. Whereas, if you leave home and drive just a few blocks, your chance of a fatal car accident are 1 in 1 million." One cannot vouch for the accuracy of these facts, but it is worth considering.

Another interesting bit of information: Governor Washburn of Wisconsin in his annual message of January 9, 1873, declared, "Some law seems to be required to break up the schools where gamblers are made. These are everywhere. Even the church (unwittingly, no doubt) is sometimes found doing the work of the devil. Gift concerts, gift enterprises and raffles, sometimes in aid of religious or charitable objects, but often for less worthy purposes, lotteries, prize packages, etc., are all devices to obtain money without value received. Nothing is so demoralizing or intoxicating, particularly to the young, as the acquisition of money or property without labor. Respectable people engaging in these chance enterprises, and easing their consciences with the reflection that the money is to go a good object, it is not strange that the youth of the state should so often fall into the habits which the excitement of games of hazard is almost certain to engender." Remember: this was in 1873, not 1973!!!

Pray this is the help you are seeking.
