

Article Summary

According to best estimates, roughly as much as one-third of the nation's money moves through the gambling industry each year. Does the Scripture explicitly prohibit it? Can we with confidence assert that gambling is wrong, a moral evil, sin? Often we have to distill principles from the Bible that we apply to current situations. Many sins are not mentioned by name in the Bible (pornography, cheating on tests, tobacco...), yet believers who want to live like Jesus know instinctively and accurately that these behaviors run counter to the will of God. While biblical texts may not reference them explicitly, biblical principles speak to them directly.

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 **JEREMIAH 20:9**
MINISTRIES

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Gambling

Gambling stands in opposition to the biblical moral worldview. The motivation behind gambling is greed. **“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil (1 Tim 6:10).”** Greed was involved in Judas’ choice to betray Christ, the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira, and was the cause of the Rich Young Ruler’s refusal to follow Christ’s. Today, the most insidious dimension of gambling is the role of government in legitimizing and promoting gambling. They take advantage of their most gullible citizens, while touting the supposed benefits of gambling. Here are compelling reasons why gambling is anti-Christian.

- ✚ **Commerce-** Working and investing for a living is based on a win/win scenario, but gambling is always win/lose. God endorsed commerce and work. When a carpenter builds a cabinet and gets paid, both parties win. One of them gets the cabinets, and one of them gets the money desired. They can both feel good about the transaction. Not so with gambling, someone always loses. Some would argue that the Stock Market is gambling. Not so, production of goods and services for the benefit of all is the desired goal.
- ✚ **Considerate-** Gambling fails to consider the innocent. We might believe if a person gambles away all his money, then that is his problem. What of his ten year old son who does without? What of his parents who cannot count on his help in their senior years? **Proverbs 15:27**, **“He who profits illicitly troubles his own house.”**
- ✚ **Faith-** Gambling is not an act of faith, but chance. **“Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23)**. The Christ follower is to live in total dependence on God to meet all of his needs (**Phil 4:19**).
- ✚ **God’s Glory-** Gambling shows no concern for God’s glory. A Christ follower should glorify God in everything (**1 Cor 10:31**) and use their money to do good for His kingdom (**Matt 6:19-21, 24**).
- ✚ **Greed-** Gambling’s motivation is greed. Clearly, greed lies at the heart of all gambling. The desire to get something for nothing is really another name for covetousness (**Ex 20:17; Prov 21:25-26**).
- ✚ **Love-** If I really love my neighbor, I will seek their good (**Matt 22:39, 1 Cor 10:24**). Can I in good conscience support something that preys on the weaknesses of those near me? Many Christians object that if they budget certain entertainment funds for gambling, what’s the harm? Besides, Christian’s waste money on all kinds of diversions. This argument reveals a total disregard for what one’s participation in gambling does to others. It is self-centered and reveals a lack of concern for the “weaker brother (**Rom 14:21**).”
- ✚ **Sovereignty of God-** Gambling’s entire system is based on chance. The gambler’s worldview assumes a world of random

chance, for which the chief virtue is luck. A biblical worldview affirms the active sovereignty of God over all events, persons, and time. The Christian trusts in God, not in the vain hope of a winning lottery number or a favorable roll of the dice.

- ✚ **Stewardship-** Biblical stewardship of material possessions is a crucial issue of discipleship. Gambling is a wasteful use of the Lord’s money. It is unlikely that Christians who gamble tithe, but even if they do, New Testament Christians believe that all of it is the Lord’s, not just the 10%. I am a steward of everything God gives me, all 100% of it. I am no freer to gamble with God’s money than I am with anyone else’s.
- ✚ **The Poor-** one of the most heinous sins of the gambling industry is its treatment of the poor. Rather than offering hope and a way out of poverty, gambling operators prey on those who are most desperate. Old Testament prophets proclaimed God’s devastating judgment against those who **“devour”** the poor, and yet gambling proponents entice those at the bottom of the economic ladder to risk everything, though they end up with nothing.
- ✚ **Work-** Scripture is full of references to God’s view of economics. In Eden, even before sin entered the world, God established the human work ethic (**Gen 1:28-30**). Part of God’s creation of man in his own image was that man would work for his food. While God provided it, Adam and Eve had to exercise **“dominion”** over the plants and animals, working for their sustenance. After sin, work changed to a more laborious task, but it remained the way God provided for them. God’s way is that we should earn what we get. Lazy, slothful, and unproductive persons are undeserving of financial rewards.
- ✚ **WWJD-** What would Jesus do? Can you picture Jesus sitting at a slot machine with a hand full of quarters? He was interested in doing his Father’s business, alleviating suffering and grief, not contributing to it.

In all likelihood, most Christians have no conception of the problem’s scope. Once confined to Nevada and New Jersey, casinos now operate in states ranging from the heartland to the deep-south. In many states slot machines and electronic games are found in gas stations and grocery stores, and lottery tickets are sold in a myriad of outlets. The tentacles of the gambling industry reach deeply into the nation’s economy and the national psyche. Gambling corrupts the culture, polluting everything it touches. Simply put and biblically supported - gambling is sin.