

SHOULD CHRISTIANS GAMBLE?

I was talking to a Christian friend who mentioned that one of his family members played the lottery. He said, "I don't play though...even though it's one of those grey areas in the church". A couple days later another friend of mine asked me, "Is it a sin to gamble?" He had recently had a conversation with a Christian friend of his whom said gambling was not a sin. My friend was a Christian whom before getting saved, played the lottery every day.

I could recall a conversation I had a year prior at my wife's Christmas work party. Me and the husband of one of my wife's co-workers struck up a conversation. He found out that I was an associate pastor and he himself was a deacon. He began to mention all these pastors and people in high positions at different churches. I didn't know any of them. He seemed shocked that I didn't know these "important" people. After our conversation ended, he politely reached into his pocket and pulled out his scratch off lottery tickets.

I used to gamble all the time. I look back and realize that unknowing I started gambling when I was about ten years old. Yeah that's right, ten. Me and my friends would go buy a 100-count pack of butter cookies for a dollar or two, then split the cookies up among ourselves evenly. We then proceeded to play cards to win each other's cookies. It never dawned on us that our nasty hands were touching all the cookies and we would later eat them, disgusting right... kids. By age 35, I was having poker parties at my house each Sunday. I shot dice, played cards, gambled at the casinos, made bets with bookies on sports, flipped coins, I mean I did everything.

When I got saved, I gave up gambling because I "felt" it was wrong, but that's just how I felt. If I based my actions on how I felt all the time and not the word of God I would be in big trouble, so eventually I learned what the word said, and I'd like to share that with you to help guide you as well.

I've heard some people compare gambling to the stock market. The rationale is that the two are one in the same and since playing the stock market isn't a sin, then gambling can't be one either, but the two are totally different. We don't actually "play" the stock market. The stock market is not a game, it's an investment into a company or item you believe will be profitable. Gambling is a game, it's not an investment into a business, and it's the transfer of one person's money at another loss.

When we search the Bible, we'll find no explicit scripture that specifically says, "Thou shalt not gamble", but there's also no scripture saying you can. I guess this is that grey area my friend was referring to, but in certain circumstances we can, should, and must take our guidance from principles set forth in the Bible to help us guide us in our decision making.

Let's look at three principles in the Bible that should help us do that.

Principle #1 - We are not our own but the Lords

As a prerequisite for everything we do, we must remember that our lives are no longer our own, but the Lords. The bible says,

"For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body." 1 Corinthians 6:20 NASB

In everything we do we have to make sure we are glorifying the Lord. Years ago, everyone wore the WWJD bracelets. Would Jesus gamble, knowing that he was taking something valuable from someone else even though they were willing to give it up willingly?

Principal #2 - The earth is the Lord's and everything in it

The Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Nothing is ours, it is all on loan. Therefore, we are to be good stewards of what God has put us in charge of. In Matthew 25:14-30 we have The Parable of the Talents. A man went away on a long journey and entrusted his property to his servants. God has entrusted his possessions to us. Can you imagine telling the Lord you took his money and gambled with it? Do you think he will say, "Well done good and faithful servant?" You said it you won huh? But if you won, doesn't that mean another person lost?

Principle #3 - Don't desire to be rich

Did you know that most people who play the lottery are poor? Why is that? It's because they have a fantasy that by playing the lottery, they will become rich. Also, when faced with a mounting pressure of bills and debt they feel that gambling is their only way out, but the Bible says,

"But godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Timothy 6:6 NIV

We must learn to be content where God has placed us in life. I'm not saying it's wrong to want to achieve better in life, for with contentment is great gain though. We should be led by the Lord in all that we do. Do you think the Lord is leading you to gamble?

Remember, the dollar you win is a dollar less that another has. The bible says, "Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, But the one who gathers by labor increases it." Proverbs 13:11 NASB

The bible also says, "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle." Proverbs 23:4-5 NIV

Most people gamble to get rich or help with the bills, but remember Paul said, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

Remember, don't let "the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." Mark 4:19 NASB Gambling is a sin when you consider the principles laid out. Be good stewards of your money, realize it's the Lord's, and don't set your heart on riches, but the Lord.

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