

It Is Written

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Gambling is a Sin

By Steve Klein

I've heard more than one person assert that "the Bible does not condemn gambling." While it is true that there is no Bible statement which says, "Thou shalt not gamble" it is entirely UNTRUE that the Bible is silent on the subject. Gambling is shown to be sinful by the principles of truth and righteousness found in the Scriptures. The Bible condemns gambling the same way it condemns racketeering, drug abuse, and pornography. None of these things is specifically mentioned in Scripture, but they can all be shown to be sinful by the straightforward application of Bible principles.

Gambling is Sinful for the Following Reasons:

1) It is an exercise in covetousness. People gamble because of a lust for money possessed by others. In Hebrews 13:5 God's book says, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." If gamblers are "content with" what they have, why are they gambling? They are looking for the big payoff! They are willing to risk what they've got out of a desire to get rich quick. "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

2) Gambling is poor stewardship. All that we have has been given to us by God and is to be used to glorify Him. The apostle Peter admonishes us to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). Gambling institutions such as casinos, horse tracks, government lotteries and charity raffles design their games in such a way as to guarantee that players will lose much more money overall than they ever win. The odds of hitting the jackpot in a typical state lottery are about one in 12 million. Any investment firm that took such chances with its clients' money would soon be out of business and probably facing criminal charges. Surely the Christian's duty to be a "faithful" steward is greater than that of some Wall Street investment firm (1 Corinthians 4:2). How can Christians consider themselves faithful stewards of the finances God has entrusted to their care and gamble them away?

3) Playing the Lottery promotes addiction. Addiction is sinful because it places another master on the throne of a person's heart. That throne should be occupied by the Lord alone. "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24a). A significant percentage of people (especially young people) who gamble will become addicted to it. It will control their lives.

4) Playing the Lottery is worldliness. Gambling is worldly in its origin and nature. In fact, one would be hard pressed to think of an activity that more people would identify as being worldly. When Hollywood wants to depict a character in a film as a man of the world, what activities do they typically have the character engage in? Three things immediately come to mind: drinking, smoking and gambling. In 1 John 2:15 the apostle John commands us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Gambling is definitely a sin. "Whoever abides in Him does not sin" (1 John 3:6).

Do You Pray?

By Bill Hall

The worshiper who would pray in the assembly must do more than bow his head and close his eyes. He must pray. "Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?" (I Corinthians 14:16). This verse suggests four requirements if one is to enter into a prayer.

1. He must listen to the prayer. One cannot legitimately say "Amen" at the conclusion of a prayer if he has not listened to the prayer. "Mind-wandering" is an ever-present problem. We sing, but we don't observe the words of the song. We bow our heads, but we don't listen to the prayer. We sit through the sermon, but our minds wander to things of an earthly nature. Consequently, we attend worship periods, but we don't worship as we ought. If one is to pray, with the congregation, he must listen to the prayer.

2. He must understand the prayer. When a man in the first century led a prayer in an unknown tongue, the worshiper could not say 'Amen,' for he could not understand the language in which the prayer was spoken. Neither can the worshiper say 'Amen' today if the leader has not spoken loudly enough to be heard or if he has used words or phrases which the worshiper does not understand. Those who lead prayers in the assembly should be conscious of the needs of the whole congregation, speaking up where all can hear and using words which all can understand.

3. He must agree with the prayer. A number of years ago, while sitting beside an old preacher, I observed his saying "Yes" or "Yes, Lord" at the conclusion of each separate phrase of the prayer as it was being led. He spoke the words softly enough that I was probably the only one in the assembly who could hear them, but I was impressed. Obviously, this brother was listening to every phrase, determining whether or not he agreed with the phrase, and was softly speaking his agreement. He was not just sitting through a prayer; he was praying. Occasionally, we hear sentiments expressed in prayer with which we do not agree. To these sentiments we cannot say "Amen."

4. He must say "Amen." The word "Amen" means "so let it be." We long to hear the strong, resounding "Amen" at the close of prayers which we used to hear. We fear that the move away from this practice is just another step toward cold, lifeless formality in our worship periods. We are not contending, however, that one must say the word "Amen" audibly; but we are suggesting that at least in his mind he should say "Amen," thus making the prayer his own prayer. He has listened to the prayer; he has understood the prayer; he has agreed with the prayer; now he speaks to God his "Amen" or approval of the prayer as his prayer. In this manner, he unites with other worshipers in common prayer to God.