

CHURCH-GOVERNMENT
LIFE TRUTH # 8
THE CHURCH IS AGAINST GAMBLING

Many things that were once recognized as sin are being accepted in today's church. The lusts of the flesh have tempted us to chase after sins that are destructive to ourselves and society.

Gambling used to be illegal in America. It was considered a vice. The word vice means: moral depravity, corruption, and wickedness. Today, this sin has been legalized by society. Church members argue that there is no scripture that says *"that thou shalt not gamble."* The Bible is a book of morals and principles. Although it may not have a specific phrase to point out a certain evil like gambling, it does have fundamental guidelines by which God expects us to live.

No specific scripture says *"thou shalt not drive under the influence of alcohol,"* but we know God's principle is there. Driving while intoxicated is a vice in society that not only endangers the driver, but puts others in harm's way as well. Therefore, society has established laws and regulations to protect us from such an evil.

The founders of this nation understood the dangers of legalizing gambling. They recognized the consequences of such a decision. On May 26, 1777, in a circular to the brigadier-generals, General Washington wrote: *"Let vice and immorality of every kind be discouraged as much as possible in your brigade; and, as a chaplain is allowed to each regiment, see that the men regularly attend divine worship. Gaming of every kind is expressly forbidden, as being the foundation of evil, and the cause of many a brave and gallant officer's ruin."*

Our nation legalized gambling in Nevada in 1961. Since 1989, it has dramatically grown. By 2013, 23 states housed either land, riverboat, dockside, or racetrack casinos. In the 2012 American Gaming Association Report, Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr. stated, *"2012 national economic impact data reveals the U.S. commercial casino industry is going strong. On the strength of a third consecutive year with increased rates of growth, national gross gaming revenues for 2012 reached their second-highest level in history."* He went on to say, *"the equivalent of gross gaming revenue - rose 4.8 percent in 2012 to \$37.34 billion."*

This does not include state lottery money and other forms of gambling. Mr. Fahrenkopf continued by stating, *"This year's polling not only includes an analysis of Americans' attitudes about the acceptability of casino gaming and the gambling habits and activities of casino visitors, but also an in depth look at young adult casino visitors — the very people with whom the future of our business lies."*

Gambling destroys a society by targeting our children. It blinds people of the purpose for which they were created. It consumes them with a need to fill their own selfish lusts. As

stated in the American Gaming Association Report, young people are *“the very people with whom the future of our business lies.”*

The casino industry has a legal age limit of 21. The highest percentage of the people who visited last year were between the ages of 21-35. Casinos boast that one third of the American population visit their establishments. They had 76.1 million visitors in 2012. Only 23 states have legalized casinos, so a very high percentage of the people living near a casino are gambling.

Twenty-three states brought in \$37.34 billion dollars through casino gambling in 2012. NBC news reported in an article titled, *“Powerball Profits Don't All Go Where You Think They Do”*, that state-run lotteries across 44 states brought in nearly \$69 billion dollars in 2012. This means \$106.34 billion dollars was gambled in 2012. This doesn't even include every type of gambling. There is also gambling with sporting events, raffle tickets, bingo, etc.

What defines gambling? Gambling is playing a game for money or property. It is betting on a chance outcome. It is risking something that you have in an attempt to win more.

“It’s just for fun!” people exclaim. Others say that it's their own money. If they want to gamble a certain amount, how can that be wrong? It is wrong because they are justifying sin. I know a lady whose Senior Center picks people up once a week and takes them to the casino. She was taught as a child that gambling was a sin, but decided to go and enjoyed it. She described herself to me as a “responsible” gambler. She informed me that every week she only took \$20 dollars and when that was gone she was done.

This justification to sin is prevalent in the church today. Many people think that if they pay their bills, it is okay for them to gamble part of their money. After all, they could win big one day.

It is hard to distinguish truth from lies when it comes to gambling in our nation. Many claim that a lot of the money goes into the school systems to help with education. The reality is that no more than eleven cents on the dollar goes to help schools and other community projects; a small percentage of the billions of dollars generated each year in the gambling industry.

Even if schools received most of the money, would that justify gambling? No! Does the end justify the means? No! The argument that a certain percentage is given to the schools should not be the issue. The issue is whether or not it is justified according to God’s Word.

Gambling, by its very definition, is what the Bible calls greed or covetousness. To gamble is to invest something that you own in the hopes of gaining more. People invest money to win games at casinos, participate in raffles, and buy lottery tickets in the hopes of winning something more. Churches are guilty of this form of gambling, too. Whenever you spend money to win money and/or property, with no work being done, you are gambling.

HERE ARE SEVEN BIBLICAL REASONS AGAINST GAMBLING

1. Gambling destroys our work ethic

In our Self-Government Life Truth #10, we learned that we are to provide for our daily necessities; we are to provide for our families; we are to provide for those in need. *Titus 3:14 (NIV)* ¹⁴ ***Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.***

An unproductive life is a life that does not work and does not earn the bread they eat. *2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 (NIV)* ¹¹ *We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.* ¹² *Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and **earn the bread they eat.***

Winnings are not earning the bread that you eat. It is not the morally responsible way to live our lives. We are to live self-controlled lives that are free from the love of money. Hard work brings profit. This is the role that God has called us to. Societies crumble when they allow “get rich quick” schemes to grow and become acceptable. These schemes destroy. They do not build up a society.

Proverbs 14:23 (NIV) ²³ *All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Acts 20:35 (NIV) ³⁵ *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

Our sinful flesh wants to be lazy. We want to have everything given to us. But Christ wants us to be pillars of society. We are to not only provide for our needs, but we are to provide for the needs of others in society.

Scriptures warn us against the “get rich quick” ideas and false dreams. *Proverbs 28:19-20 (NIV)* ¹⁹ *He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.* ²⁰ *A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.*

Gambling destroys the work ethic of a society. It also increases bankruptcy filings. Professor John Warren Kindt calculated that for every dollar in gambling revenue that a state takes in, it costs taxpayers \$1.90. Society pays for lost wages, counseling centers, welfare costs for destroyed families, and the increases in criminal behaviors as people seek ways to pay off their debts.

Gambling takes people away from the hard work that needs to be invested in a strong society. Gamblers become lazy; trying to win big and retire. Gambling does not create

wealth. It only redistributes wealth to others. Casinos claim that they are creating jobs and bringing tax revenue into society, but that is not the case. People are losing money, lives are being destroyed, and taxes are continuing to rise as we deal with the effects of this sin.

It is hard work that produces money and goods for society. Gambling produces neither. Gambling takes what others have; making very few rich.

2. Gambling is not loving my neighbor

The definition of greed is an eager desire to gain more. Greed is closely tied to coveting which is the desire to have what others own. When a person gambles, they are hoping to gain what others own. People get together to bet their money; coveting to win everyone else's money. Greed and coveting are both condemned in Scripture. They are not the reflection of a Christ-like attitude.

People bet on the lottery. They hope to win the jackpot. What is the jackpot? It is a culmination of everyone's money. When you buy a lottery ticket, you are coveting everyone else's money. You desire what they own. This is the very definition of coveting. The church should abstain from and stand up against every type of gambling. It is a terrible vice that leads people into sin and selfishness. Our two greatest commands are to love God and to love others.

Romans 13:8-10 (NIV) ⁸ *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.* ⁹ *The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁰ *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* When you gamble, you are not loving your brother, you are desiring to take from your brother.

Christian love is sacrificial. It involves giving to others. *1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)* ¹⁶ *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.* ¹⁷ *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?* ¹⁸ *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

When people gamble, they are not hoping that the other people get their money. They are hoping that they take other people's money. They are hoping that others lose and they win. Jesus told us in *Matthew 7:12 (NIV)* ¹² *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

How can you assure people that you will not take their money just as you do not want them to take your money? You do not gamble! That is how you can make sure you are treating your brothers as you would want to be treated. A characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians,

Chapter 13, is that it is not self-seeking. Christian love considers others better than themselves. It seeks to do others good and not harm.

3. Gambling is a root to all kinds of evil

The root of gambling is to gain more. People claim that it is just a game for entertainment. But the entertainment they are seeking is the rush that they get when they win.

Society needs to be built upon godly virtues like self-control, self-restraint, patience, and contentment. Legalizing gambling opened the door to many vices that we are facing today. We live in an impatient world. The Scriptures tell us about the evils of greed. *1 Timothy 6:10 (NIV)*¹⁰ *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

The Bible warns us about these foolish and harmful desires that plunge us into ruin and destruction. It is a proven fact that gambling destroys families. People become secretive. People neglect their spouses and their children. People lose their family's income and security. Many even steal from their own families and others to support their addiction. Gambling opens the door to all kinds of evil. Prostitution and other sexual immoralities occur more in areas of gambling. Nevada has the highest suicide rate in the nation, as well as over 130 pages of advertisements relating to prostitution in their yellow pages. Crime also increases as gamblers become desperate and distraught.

Christians should know better because the Word of God states, *“the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”*

4. Gambling is a bad witness

Are you satisfied with God? Are you satisfied with what the Lord has provided for you? The Bible tells us to be satisfied with what the Lord has provided for us. This teaching is about being content with what you have. Today many people are dissatisfied with their lives. People believe the lie that money will make everything better. This lie has even come into the church. Many believers are eager for money and are gambling to get rich. They may not go to the casinos, but they are playing the lotteries, hoping money will solve their problems as well as indulge their flesh with materialism.

Money is not the answer to all of life's issues. Jesus is the answer to all of life's issues. When we believe that money will solve all of our problems, we have just made money an idol. We are commanded as Christians to put to death this kind of idolatry.

*Colossians 3:5 (NIV)*⁵ *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

If you love money, you will never have enough money. *Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)* ¹⁰ *Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.*

John the Baptist came on the scene to prepare the way for the Lord. One of the sins that he addressed was contentment. He told the people that they needed to repent and be content with what the Lord had provided for them. Be so content with what you have, that if you have two of something, share one with someone in need. Don't be so self-focused that all you care about is acquiring more.

Luke 3:9-14 (NIV) ⁹ *The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.* ¹⁰ *"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.* ¹¹ *John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."* ¹² *Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"* ¹³ *"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.* ¹⁴ *Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely--be content with your pay."*

He told them to be content; to be satisfied with what the Lord has provided. Be content with your pay. Don't start looking for ungodly ways to earn more money whether it be through extortion or gambling. Be godly in your character and produce good fruit.

Paul understood this teaching and he told us to do the same in *Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)* ¹¹ *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* ¹² *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.* ¹³ *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Paul learned to be content whether well fed or hungry. Paul was satisfied with Jesus and the relationship that he had with Him no matter what the circumstances. Are you satisfied with your life as it is? Do you desire more things and more money for your satisfaction? The church should be satisfied with Jesus and ready to meet Him every day. Are you ready to meet Jesus today?

The church should be an example of contentment to the world. After all, this place is not our home. We should not be consumed with acquiring more. In fact, Jesus condemns those who desire to build bigger and bigger barns to store "their" stuff. We are called to higher purposes as Christians. As Jesus said in *Acts 20:35 (NIV)* ³⁵ *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

The church needs to recognize man's sinful nature and strive to keep his earthly passions under control. Opening doors that arouse these passions only leads to destruction. Greed

is a passion that is within us all. We need to be denying the passions of the flesh. Jesus said in *Mark 7:21-23 (NIV)* ²¹ *For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,* ²² *greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.* ²³ *All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'*"

Sin is a dangerous thing. It brings ruin and destruction. Many young people are being ensnared into the passions of the flesh through gambling. Paul warns us to be content and to stay away from the desire to get rich. *1 Timothy 6:6-9 (NIV)* ⁶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain.* ⁷ *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* ⁸ *But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.* ⁹ *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

The church needs to be teaching people to stay free from the love of money. It is a bad witness to gamble. Gambling shows a lack of contentment with God and all that He has provided. *Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)* ⁵ *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

When we gamble, even if it is just a "little" money, we are being accomplices to someone's demise. Perhaps the person we are gambling with is an addict who is destroying his family. Perhaps the person we are playing with will become addicted and destroy their life. Don't be guilty of causing someone to stumble because of something you have approved of in your life.

Even a "little" sin manages to destroy many lives. The church is not to approve of sinful addictions. Our examples should lead others to follow Christ; not follow paths that lead them into destruction. So even if you only play for a "little" money, it is a sin and a bad example for others.

5. Gambling is bad stewardship

We are stewards and not owners. It is our responsibility as stewards to handle the money that God provides us with very carefully. The lure and lies of gambling are devastating to society. The flesh desires to be wealthy. The media promotes the few who actually win the lottery as stars and lifts them up as examples for us to follow.

Satan feeds the greed within our hearts and fills our hearts with lies. He wants people to believe that it's only a few dollars. He wants people to think they might be a big winner someday. But the reality of gambling is this: Most people do not win. Most people are losers in the game of chance. Most people squander away the provisions that God gives them for their needs and the needs of those around them.

When we stand before God, we will be held accountable, as stewards, as to how we have handled His wealth. Do we really want to stand before Him and tell him that we have

gambled away a lot of His money in the hopes of winning more; when He has clearly told us to keep our lives free from the love of money?

Gambling is corrupt and invades society, placing a chokehold on a nation. Many politicians today are funded through the revenues of gambling.

If gambling were good for the economy, we'd have a lot of rich gamblers. Instead, we have very few winners and many, many losers. The people who are becoming wealthy off of gambling are the owners and politicians. *Proverbs 22:16 (NIV)* ¹⁶ *He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich--both come to poverty.*

Have we forgotten that the Lord is the one who will bless our economy? *Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (NIV)* ¹⁷ *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."* ¹⁸ *But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.*

God is the giver of wealth. We are to acquire it through honesty, integrity, hard work, self-control, and responsibility. One day we will give an account for how we handled **His wealth**.

Look at what Jesus said about being a good steward of His money in *Luke 16:11-13 (NIV)* ¹¹ *So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?* ¹² *And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?* ¹³ *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

6. Gambling violates the poor

Many people who gamble cannot afford to gamble. While all money should be used for good purposes, many people are spending what should be going to pay bills and other expenses on the lottery. It is a proven fact that the majority of the people who gamble are the poor. They are placing their hope in the "god" of money. The hope of many is to become rich.

There is a special place in God's heart for the poor and the needy. Those that win lotteries (like the Powerball) are taking a lot of poor people's money. Do you really want to get rich at the expense of the poor's misfortune? We can justify it and say that they didn't have to play or they made their own choice to gamble. But the Scriptures are clear that we should not be taking from the poor. Instead, we are commanded to help the poor. *Proverbs 14:31 (NIV)* ³¹ *He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.*

We should be seeking to educate the poor in the ways of God. We need to be an example of godly living for them. God commands us to help the poor and be open-handed towards

them. This is part of the process of having a healthy society. Many times we want to hide the poor, blame them for all of their misfortunes, and lend no helping hands.

Proverbs 19:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

If we cared about the poor, we would cry out for justice for them. We would seek to stop the ungodly practice of gambling. *Proverbs 29:7 (NIV) ⁷ The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.* If we really care about our brothers, we will stop welcoming these vices in society and urge others to do the same.

7. Gambling is sin

Gambling is greed and covetousness and both are condemned in the Word of God. To justify gambling in any form is to go against the Word of God. All gambling is sin. From raffles that are for “good causes” to bingo, to small bets in people’s homes. If the raffle is for a good cause, just give the money. Do not seek to gain more through your bet. It is improper for us to want what others have for the benefit of ourselves. To want what others have, so that we can have more, is coveting. It is sinful. On the Day of Judgment, we are not going to be judged by how much we have; we will be judged by who we are.

It is sad when more and more Christians are interested in *winning* the lottery than *winning* lost souls. *Proverbs 11:30 (NIV) ³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.*

It used to be that Christians would have been ashamed to go to a public place to gamble. George Washington would have been ashamed to go into a convenience store and buy a lottery ticket, but he was not afraid to share his belief in Jesus as Lord. Today, the opposite is true. Many Christians gamble publicly, but are ashamed to share Christ publicly. They are ashamed to share their faith with others, but they are not ashamed to buy lottery tickets or go to a casino. We need to return to the desire for godly winnings of lost souls and turn away from the desire of worldly winnings.

Proverbs 11:4 (NIV) ⁴ Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

The church needs to be against all forms of gambling. We need to be teaching against the destructive evils that it brings into a society. We opened the door to gambling in the 1960's and are now experiencing the evils that came with it. We must abstain from our sinful desires and seek to walk in righteousness. If our generation continues to legalize more and more sin, we will continue to pay the consequences.

When we know people who are buying lottery tickets, we need to speak up and tell them that money is not the answer to life's problems. Jesus is the answer and gambling is sin. Look at this passage in *Ephesians 5:3-7 (NIV)* ³ *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.* ⁴ *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.* ⁵ *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.* ⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.* ⁷ *Therefore do not be partners with them.*

We are not to be partners with the disobedient. Gambling is partnering with them. We need to stay away from such vices in society. We need to speak up for Biblical principles. The next time you desire to buy a lottery ticket in the hopes that you can gain more, remember that gambling is sin. We should not be a part of the downfall of our society. We should be leading our society in Christian character and in Christian love for one another.