

Lecture #23: Gambling - Some Biblical Principles (Lecture Outline)

"A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished" (Prov 28:20)

1. Biblical Principles that apply
 - a. Is God sovereign in all things, including meeting our needs? (Matt 6: 25-34; 10:29-30; Heb 1:3a; Prov 3:5-6; 16:4,33)
 - b. How has God ordained that man should provide for his family? (Gen 3:17-18; 23-24; Prov 13:11; 2 Thess 3:11-12; 1 Tim 5:8; Col 3:17-18; 23-24)
 - c. Does God condemn "risk" taking, or encourage it in productive ways? (Matt 6:19-21; 25:14-30)
 - o All of life entails some form of risk to us (we are not omniscient)
 - o Parable of the talents shows knowledgeable investment is approved (higher risk than a bank)
 - o Indiscriminate investment is similar to gambling; wise, studied investment still has risk but generally produces goods & services - gambling produces little of lasting value
 - d. What are some of the fundamental issues that can be involved?
 - o Greed (1 Tim 6:10; Luke 12:15) and bondage to money (addiction) (Matt 6:24)
 - o Idolatry (Matt 6:24)
 - o Chasing after fantasies (Prov 12:11; 17:24; 28:19)
 - o Lack of patience (Prov 13:11; 21:5; 28:19; Matt 6:33-34)
 - o Slothfulness (Prov 13:4; 2 Thess 3:10)
 - o Poor stewardship (1 Peter 4:10)
 - o Lack of contentment (1 Tim 6:6)
 - o Are our riches here or in heaven? (Matt 6:19-21)
 - o Who or what are we really trusting in? (Prov 3:5-6)
2. What if I gamble just for the entertainment?
 - a. We are called to lead exemplary lives (1 Peter 2:11-12)
 - b. We are not to mimic the futile pursuits of the ungodly (3 John 11)
 - c. Are we telling the world that our God does not provide for us? (Matt 6:25-34)
 - d. What about the example being set for our children? (Prov 22:6; Col 1:28)
 - e. Exercising our "freedom" can destroy our brother (1 Cor 8; Rom 14)
 - f. If we don't set a higher standard for the world, who will?
 - g. Would we be thrilled or ashamed if Jesus returned while we pulled the slot machine handle?
 - h. Can we truly say we are gambling for God's glory? (1 Cor 10:31)
 - i. Is gambling, no matter how benign, sin? (What would wisdom dictate? What is the true motivation of our heart? What is the resulting fruit?)
 - j. We have freedom to gamble as long as we're not in bondage to it (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23-24; Gal 5:13) and our actions are not a stumbling block to others (Rom 14); however, by gambling we:
 - o Validate legalized gambling which is destructive to people and families (Eph 5:11)
 - o Encourage even more extensive availability (3 John 11)
 - o Are not good stewards of God's resources (what are our true motives?)
 - o Expose ourselves to an environment & lifestyle often ungodly (Psalm 1:1-3; 3 John 11)
 - o Set a poor example for others that are weaker (Rom 14)
 - o Gain something for nothing, thus breeding ingratitude (Prov 20:21)
 - o Participate in something that is fundamentally exploitive in nature, since for someone to "win" someone else must have "lost" (Ex 20:15)
 - o Open ourselves up to greater temptation (James 1:13-15)
3. How does casting lots in the Bible differ from gambling? (Lev 16:8; Num 26:55; Joshua 18:10; Prov 18:18; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:24-26; Matt 27:35; Psalm 22:18)
 - a. Means given by God to render a decision if needed, not a means to financial gain
 - b. Some decisions are too important for man to make, God must make them
4. Is promoting gambling a proper role of government? (Benefitting from evil?)(Rom 13:1-6)

- a. Government is to punish the evil doer, and not promote actions and behaviors that result in the growth of evil and the destruction of families
 - b. Government is to commend the good, restraint from gambling is beneficial for all
 - c. Government is not to benefit from evil behavior (taxing & sponsoring gambling for revenue)
 - d. Government is not to legitimize evil behavior by participating and encouraging its spread
5. We are to set an example and demand strict accountability of government to discourage behavior destructive to society (salt and light)
- a. In our own personal lives:
 - o Study the Biblical principles involved
 - o Work hard, show restraint, do not trust in gambling to bring about riches, set a godly example
 - o Prayerfully consider what the real motivation is to gamble (entertainment?)
 - o Consider what we are supporting by being involved at all
 - o Consider the example we are setting to others
 - o Do not place ourselves at greater risk of temptation
 - b. In our home:
 - o Teach proper Biblical principles about trust in God, diligent work, personal initiative
 - o Set an example for our children by our own actions
 - o Be sensitive to examples set in our homes that may lead to greater involvement in gambling
 - o Make wise investments after careful investigation; be prudent with our time and resources (insurance policies help in being a good steward of resources, not a means to get rich)
 - c. In the church:
 - o Help those that may be in bondage to gambling to realize it is idolatry
 - o Be aware of the Biblical principles involved, as well as statistics
 - o Differentiate between sin and ignorance relative to the issues involved
 - o Be sensitive to the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters
 - o Be wise in providing help - what is the real source of their financial difficulties (Deacons)
 - d. In our State:
 - o Be aware of the common reasons little opposition exists against gambling:
 - o Apathy of most people and lack of awareness of problems associated with gambling
 - o Legal ambiguity and complexity involved discourage any in-depth investigation
 - o Limited funding available to combat it
 - o Poor understanding of the proper role of government
 - o Don't support legalization of gambling in any form (not a proper function of government)
 - o Demand scientific information and statistical data to prove gambling is beneficial to society should any gambling be endorsed by the state
 - o Encourage strong fiscal accountability for funds the state is collecting from gambling
 - o Work to remove legal sanctions (and impose stiffer control) of legalized gambling through letters to representatives, letters to editors, petitions, talking to neighbors, passing data along
4. Bottom Lines:
- a. Gambling is pervasive in our society, it begins in early life, and is encouraged in many venues
 - b. It is not the purpose of government to entice, promote and benefit from gambling
 - c. Gambling per se is not evil, but the environment, our heart, and our desires can easily be sinful
 - d. We have the freedom to gamble, but (like drinking) it can be unwise, a poor example to others, and contributes to the moral malaise and destruction of our society
 - e. We're to set a godly standard & example for our families and the world by our actions and with truth
 - f. **Jer 17:11 "Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool."**

References:

- o "Gambling and the Lottery" Tony Evans; 1995
- o "Family News From Dr. James Dobson" April and July 1999 newsletter
- o "National Gambling Impact Study Commission Report" 18 June, 1999