

# *Spiritual Considerations...*

*Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.*



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*Dave Phillips, editor*

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## **Lottery Concerns - Dave Phillips, Germantown, TN**

A bill has been introduced that will allow Tennesseans to vote on whether we should have a state lottery. This highly confrontational topic causes us to address the reasons for or against participation in the lottery, or gambling. The following articles (some edited) address this important topic. We need to think carefully and prayerfully regarding the reasons for our decisions. Find your Bible, consider the verses, reflect on these verses as you talk to others about the implications of our decision. Let's continue to pray.

### **Lottery Fever Infecting Tennesseans - Rubel Shelly, Lovelines, Volume 27, number 7**

The Tennessee Constitution prohibits lotteries. (A little bit of America's history with lotteries and other forms of gambling would reveal to our legislators why it does. It opened the door to political corruption.) Our legislature seems poised now to put the lottery issue on the ballot in November 2002 to change the law – and our habits.

The naiveté and dishonesty that have swirled together to created the possibility of Tennessee joining with 37 states and the District of Columbia to have a state-sponsored lottery are monumental. Just think about it...

The millions of dollars Tennessee would reap from sponsoring a lottery won't solve our education problems. Lottery money will just be switched for other education funds in a classic bait-and-switch scheme. The state will presumably have more money, but more money won't change legislative priorities. Lotteries have not fixed the education problems in other states that run them.

Offering the lottery as "painless taxation" to Tennesseans is false advertising. Not only will our state have to spend millions setting up another agency to run and regulate the lottery, but predictable social costs that always and inevitably accompany gambling will have to be funded. We could easily go in the hole!

The lesson that everybody from President Bush to Dave Ramsey to Sen. Cohen says people need to learn for the sake of our fiscal health is to increase personal savings and eliminate debt. States with lotteries can hardly afford to encourage personal savings among their citizens. Instead, they lure them to buy lottery tickets.

The State of Tennessee may soon be in the same ethical conflict as the people who sell alcohol, tobacco, and sex-and violence-filled movies. That is, we could become like other states who have to try to make what's clearly bad for people look good for people. Do we want our governor, elected officials, and state-paid agency heads speaking on platforms to encourage fiscal diligence – with "Play the Tennessee Lottery" buttons on their lapels? Our state government should be protecting its citizens from exploitation rather than bilking them.

The bipartisan National Gambling Impact Study Commission reported in 1999 that 15 million Americans are "problem gamblers" and that teens are particularly vulnerable to problems associated with gambling. The commission recommended a moratorium on the spread of gambling in the United States. So Tennessee wants to join the states around us in promoting gambling?

If Tennesseans choose to go to Las Vegas, Gulfport, or Kentucky to play slots, roll dice, or buy lottery tickets, they have the freedom to do so. But to put the State of Tennessee into the gambling business is something else again. This isn't a church-over-secular or self-righteous-over- public-spirited issue. It's a common-sense-over-bilking-the-public issue.

### **The Sinfulness of Gambling - Mike McDaniel, Sower, Vol. 14, No. 5, September 2000**

In the April 1996 edition of Reader's Digest there was an eye-opening article entitled "Gambling's Toll in Minnesota." They began the article with this true story.

"Hour after hour, the blackjack cards flipped past, and still she played. Friday afternoon blurred into Saturday. Through the ringing of slot machines and chattering of coins dropping into ten trays, Catherine Avina heard her name paged. "Are you coming home tonight?" it was her 21 year-old son,

Joaquin, on the phone. "Probably not," she answered. Avina didn't go to Mystic Lake Casino in Prior Lake, Minn., as much as she escaped to it. That weekend in May 1994, the depressed 49 year old mother of three was escaping the worse news yet – she was in danger of being fired after almost 11 years as an assistant state attorney general. On Monday, her fourth straight day at the casino, she dragged herself back to her St. Paul home, broke and more depressed than ever. Two days later, Joaquin confronted his mother about her gambling, and they argued. The next morning, when she didn't come out of her bedroom, he peeked in. Two empty bottles of anti-depressant and a suicide note were near her body. Later the family found debts of more than \$7000, and Avina was still making payments for gambling-addiction therapy received a year earlier."

Having lived for the past year in Caruthersville, Missouri where a river-boat casino is located, it is not difficult to see the tragic effects of gambling. Gambling can result in ruined lives, families, and businesses; in bankruptcies and bad loans, in suicides, embezzlements and other crimes committed to feed or cover up gambling habits – and increases in cost to taxpayers for investigating, prosecuting and punishing those crimes. What is gambling? In the strict sense of the term, gambling refers to the playing of a game as well as the staking or risking of money to be lost or won on the outcome. For example, the United States Postal Service has stated that a lottery always has three factors: "A consideration contributed by the participant, the element of chance in the selection of winners, and a prize." There are many forms of gambling that will fit these three criteria. The lottery, pari-mutual betting on horses and dogs, punchboards, poker machines, slot machines, playing-bingo, cards or dice for money, betting on ball games and boxing, raffles and the selling of chances are all forms of gambling. Gambling is sinful no matter how it is packaged and sold to the public. Let us see some Biblical principles that reveal its sinfulness.

*The principle of attitude:* Gambling is sinful because it violates the golden rule of Matt. 7:12. Gamblers are not practicing the golden rule by any stretch of the imagination. They are seeking all others to lose while they win. It does not matter if others are willing participants or not, the result is the same. People may agree to commit fornication with each other, but their agreement does not make it right. Fornication is still sin (1 Cor. 6:18). The same is true with gambling. Gambling also violates the attitude of Galatians 6:10. Are you doing good to someone when you take his money in gambling?

*The principle of affection:* Gambling violates the first of all commandments, to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). There is no way a person can be a lover of gambling and a lover of God at the same time (Matt. 6:24). Gambling also violates the second of the greatest commandments, to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). One is not loving his neighbor when he is feverishly trying to win his neighbor's paycheck, his house, or his car. His love, his affection, is centered in self and self-alone. Rom. 13:10 says "Love works no ill to his neighbor." Such cannot be said of the practice of gambling.

*The principle of acquisition:* It is important to understand the principle of acquisition. There are four ways to acquire money. (1) Money may be earned through labor (Prov. 13:11). (2) Money may be received as a gift (Phil. 4:15). (3) Money may be found with no way to determine who may have lost it. (4) Money may be stolen (Eph. 4:28). The money one receives from gambling is not earned, it is not a gift, and it is not found. Thus it is not acquired through the three legitimate ways of obtaining money. That only leaves one other way, theft. The money received is stolen by consent. Gambling goes against God's plan for man to earn his living by honest work (Gen. 3:19; 2 Thess. 3:7-10; Eph. 4:28).

*The principle of avarice:* In 2 Tim. 3:2, Paul said that in the last days people would be covetous. Thayer says the Greek word for covetous means "loving money, avaricious." Avarice refers to an "insatiable greed for riches, and inordinate desire to gain and hoard wealth, covetous." Gambling is a form of covetousness (Eph. 5:5; Lk. 12:15; Col. 3:5). So many today love money and the things money will buy. They have the mistaken idea that the more they possess the happier they will be. Is that not one of the main reasons why people gamble? Is it not covetousness and avarice?

*The principle of addiction:* Gamblers Anonymous estimates that there are 6-10 million compulsive gamblers in the U.S. today. Some become so obsessed with gambling that they will readily yield to any temptation in order to get money to indulge their habit. Compulsive gamblers attempt suicide at a higher rate than any other group. Knowing what we know about the addictive power of gambling, one is certainly at risk to be brought under its addictive power. Read 1 Cor. 6:12 and John 8:34.

*The principle of accountability:* As stewards, we must be faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). We will be held accountable for our stewardship. Gambling is not good stewardship, because the gambler wastes his substance in riotous living (Luke 15:13).