

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." – Ephesians 5:23

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No. 6

What About Christians And Gambling?

by Leo Rainey

Arkansas will be deciding this year whether to follow adjoining states in expanding legalized gambling. At this time, the only legal "gambling" in Arkansas is at the race tracks in Hot Springs and West Memphis. The legislature has already referred an amendment to the voters for the November election. This amendment would make bingo, under certain restrictions, legal in Arkansas. As this article was being written in late May, there were four other groups with proposals seeking enough signatures to have their particular amendment on the November ballot. These four proposals, though varying in many respects, would all open the door for extensive legalized gaming in our state. This would include statewide lottery and casinos, as well as bingo and other games of chance.

For those of us who profess to be Christians, what should be our stance on these gambling issues? Is it morally or Scripturally wrong to gamble? What does God think about Christians gambling? There are a large number of individuals in congregations of the church in North Central Arkansas who have already taken a stand and will be working to defeat all gambling proposals that will be on the ballot this fall. More about this later. For now, let's look at the issue of gambling and see why it is sinful.

What Is Gambling, Anyway?

Some people say that "life is a gamble," as is business and farming, so everything might be called gambling. However this is not true. **"Gambling is risking something of value where the outcome is based upon chance or unpredictable results, hoping for gain which is generated by the losses of others who are participating in a similar risk."** Note the essential elements: (1) risking something of value, (2) results are unpredictable and based on chance, (3) hope for gain, (4) gain is

generated by the losses of others engaged in a similar risk. In business, farming and other pursuits investments are made, skill is used, and results are not based purely on chance. Therefore, these pursuits cannot be classed as gambling in the same sense that lottery, bingo, slot machines, raffles, and video poker are. Even though there are risks in life and business, as well as most pursuits, this does not meet the criteria for gambling.

What Are Some Moral Arguments Against Gambling?

A number of our brethren have written good articles relating to the moral arguments against gambling. In the March, 1994 Gospel Advocate, an article by Garry Barnes, who quotes brethren Garland Elkins and Robert Taylor, Jr., lists many of these moral arguments. Please study these points carefully.

- A. A gambler is motivated by greed, covetousness and selfishness. In Luke 12:15, we read, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." See also Eph 5:3,5; Col. 3:5, and note Acts 20:35, where Christ taught, "It is more blessed to give than receive."
- B. Gambling violates the golden rule (Matt. 7:12) and the second greatest commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). For any person to win, others must lose. You are hoping (and betting) that your neighbors will lose, and you want his money without earning it and with no services rendered. Is this practicing the golden rule? Is this loving your neighbor as yourself?
- C. It violates the first of all commandments to love God with all our being (Matt. 22:39). Gambling is ad-

dictive and many become obsessed with trying to win. It becomes a task master for many and thus, they are its slave. The Bible teaches that we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).

- D. Gambling is wrong because it is trying to get "something for nothing." It violates the work ethic. Paul taught that we are to earn our living by good and honest methods (Eph. 4:28). We are stewards of God's money. Does He endorse wasting it at gambling enterprises, which also support many other vices and sins?
- E. Since gambling is addictive (at least 5% of all gamblers will become compulsive gamblers, according to studies), this leads to other sins such as lying, cheating and stealing to pay debts. Homes are often destroyed, property is lost and suicides increase in areas where gambling has been expanded. Some who are not addicted to gambling will still resort to crime to make up for losses they cannot afford.
- F. Gambling causes a person to place his trust in material things rather than God. Read Matt. 6:19-34; I Tim. 6:7-12; I Tim. 4:10.

Christians, we should not ever let anything prevent us from taking a stand for what God has taught. Even if gambling provided more money for schools and the police and our taxes would be lowered, we still must not support what is sinful.

What Are Some Social Consequences of Gambling?

- A. Lottery and gambling take a higher toll on the poor. Many of these people spend money when they cannot even afford food and clothing for their families.
- B. Lottery and casinos would not supply a significant amount of money for schools and state operating budget. Richard Sims, Office of Tax Research for Arkansas, reported to a legislative subcommittee on December 7,

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1993, that lottery would net about \$33 million or only 1.5% of the state operating budget. He said, "The bottom line is there is not really a lot of revenue potential there." He likewise gave a dim report on potential casino revenue for Arkansas.

- C. Legalized gambling does not generate new wealth. It redistributes money from many to a few. Most jobs that are created by gambling business are low paying. In a two year study by Dr. Robert Goodman, a professor of regional planning at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, it was found that **casinos cost more to the states and communities than they promised to bring in.** He says that **the business that casinos generate usually comes at the expense of other entertainment businesses in the region.** (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, May 24, 1994)
- D. Legalized gambling introduces more people to gambling and one in 20 will likely become problem gamblers. Each such gambler could cost the state at least \$56,000, not including trial and incarceration costs. Add to that the law enforcement problems: more drunk drivers, drugs, prostitutes, and crime, and you see that the social costs can be rather high. In Mississippi, there are already many problems. Tunica County now has **seven** operating casinos. Reports are that benevolent requests

in the gambling areas have surged, children are being abandoned, pawn shops are the fastest growing businesses, drunk drivers and traffic problems are multiplying, many retail businesses sales are down, and school children often do not have school lunch money because, "Mother lost our money at the casinos."

- F. Legalized gambling attracts the same kind of criminal elements as unauthorized gambling. The Nevada syndicates are investing heavily in Mississippi casinos. You might not know that Nevada has more houses of prostitution than libraries and more prostitutes than policemen. Most of the proposals for legalized gambling in Arkansas are from **out of state people.** Most of this money will exit the state to these out of state people.

What Can We Do?

For a starter, **refuse to sign any petition to get gambling proposals on the ballot this fall, and plan to vote against all gambling proposals.**

In this area, we are preaching sermons from the pulpit on the sin of gambling and also the social consequences. Congregations are cooperating in running ads in local papers. We will be sending congregations in Arkansas some background material on gambling and possible ideas on working against the proposal. As this summer progresses and the battle thickens, **please determine that you are going to do all you can to uphold what is right in God's sight.**

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Editor's Note – Leo Rainey is particularly qualified to speak on the issue of gambling and how it is related to both religious and social issues. Leo has preached the gospel of Christ for over 35 years while supporting himself and his family in secular work. For 29 years brother Rainey served the University of Arkansas as a community development specialist. As such he was and is familiar with the impact studies on businesses and communities where gambling has reared its ugly head. He also knows that what is in the world will work its way into the church eventually. He has helped to organized the church in Fulton County, Arkansas to fight against this evil and is willing to have you use his

experience in organizing the church in your area to fight a similar battle. Call him or write to him for further information. Lord willing, we will soon be putting out a statewide mailing of some material which will be of help in getting the people in your Arkansas community to work against the encroachment of gambling in our state. Those outside of Arkansas whose states are considering legislation to legalize gambling need to begin a fight against it **now!** Brethren and friends, if we do not act now, it may soon be too late to do anything but lament our inaction. – Editor.

WHY PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE (1)

by Jerry Moffitt

Of course people disagree on what the Bible teaches because one or both are ignorant of one or more passages in the Bible which, if known would correct them. This happens to all of us, and we change our views as we learn more. We know that by comparing scripture with scripture we often get the closest thing possible to an inspired interpretation. To understand a Bible verse, all the Bible passages which in any way touch on it must be brought to bear. However, I want to go beyond all this. We might say that the above statements are a "given" and all know that a lack of Bible knowledge causes disagreements. Now I want to investigate something additional, and a good starting point is Jeremiah 10:23: **"O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"** (Jer. 10:23). Too often a problem in interpreting the Bible is that people read what they think into the Bible. They feel free to add their thoughts and they think that what they surmise is true and in their minds they begin a process which forces what they believe right into the text. A good way to test for this and prevent it is to require of yourself a Bible verse which expressly and truly says what you are saying. You may think the Bible actually says what you are saying but can you prove it by finding a verse which, without torturing it, says what you are saying? Sometimes we might be surprised how hard pressed we might be to find such a verse, and often we might have to admit we can't find one. This ought to tell us to back off and prayerfully relook at things.

However, another warning is found in Jeremiah 17:9: **"The heart is deceitful about all things, and it is exceeding corrupt: who can know it?"**

Truly, the capacity and ability of the human heart to be crass, dull, unseeing, and willfully deceived is almost past honest belief. We have wondered how Israel could see all the signs done in Egypt and then go on and distrust the power of God to help them destroy the seven nations of Canaan.

Another case that amazes me is the one at the tomb of Jesus where the guards see an angel who descended from heaven. Frightened until, it seems, they pass out, these poor, confused wretches later straggle into the city and with what must have appeared to be sincere honesty, passionately told their strange encounter to the chief priests. The priests couldn't dismiss the account as foolishness, so the best they can do is bribe the guards. How could they do that?! This objective account by those obviously not on the side of the disciples should have converted them. It didn't, anymore than the obvious miracle Peter worked converted the Sanhedrin when the miracle could not be denied by them (Acts 14:16, 17). Yet today we actually wonder why men cannot understand the Bible alike. So, first, we must consider the wildness of the human heart.

(Continued in next issue)

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Let My Life

Let my life be a ministry to others;
Let me serve in sunshine or rain.
Lord, I want to be a blessing to many,
never live just for earthly gain.

Let me be like a shining clear river
flowing out in service to men.
Then when dear Jesus comes
back to reward us,
a bright and shining crown I'll win.

Let my life always be humble and lowly;
ne'r torn and misshapen by pride.
Then I will always be lovely like Jesus,
and some day I'll sit by His side.

Let my life be like a whispering fountain
serving so quietly but well.
Then I will not fear crossing that dark river,
or the chime of the final bell.

David Macy

COVETOUSNESS

by Max Patterson

Thayer defines the original New Testament word for covetous as: "One eager to have more, especially what belongs to others. Greedy of gain, covetous." The words used for covetousness in the New Testament are not found many times, but whenever they are found they come through with a forceful directive.

Paul says Christians ought not to keep company with other Christians who are covetous (I Cor. 5:9-11). He affirms that covetous people will not inherit the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:5).

Jesus makes an extremely interesting observation in Luke 12:15: "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." So many times we dream about how much better life would be if we had this or that. But that is not what real living is all about. A man may have many "things," but not have happiness because man's basic needs are not satisfied with material possessions. Jesus said "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (satisfied)" (Matt. 5:6). "Covetousness" was one of the factors which contributed to the condemning of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:29; cf. Eph 4:19). Paul tells us not to even let covetousness be named among us as characteristic of Christians (Eph. 5:3).

In Col. 3:5, Paul advises us to put to death (mortify) "Covetousness, which is idolatry." Some evidently are so greedy for what others have that the pursuit of getting it becomes idol worship. Nothing fits this like gambling and the attitude of the gambler. In fact, the gambler can and does become so obsessed that GA clubs have sprung up all over the country. These GA clubs are to gamblers what AA clubs are to alcoholics. These clubs are actually trying to get people "unhooked."

It Is Not Difficult To Tell Who Is Covetous

Many people are so obsessed with how they might get something for nothing, that they will make merchandise of you, and take advantage of you through insincere words (cf. II Pet. 2:3). Paul denied this as one of his motives (I Thess. 2:5).

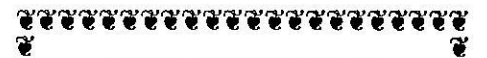
Covetousness is not preached about, nor studied as it could be. It is one of the besetting sins of the age, and as such more and more attention is going to have to be given to it. But, how, someone questions. It is not difficult to tell who is covetous, since it deals with the mind and heart? It is difficult to see the beginnings of covetousness in a man's mind, but let it be said clearly, no Christian would have difficulty spotting the fruits of covetousness (Matt. 7:16).

How difficult is it to see a greedy spirit, an obsessed gambler, an extortioner, one who regards a neighbor's wife as a material possession (cf Deut. 5:21; Ex. 20:17), or one who would deprive another of his property or inheritance, cheating the poor for our own benefit, etc., etc.

I submit to you that the fruits of covetousness are easy to see and to identify. We simply need to understand what covetousness is. We need to understand it is a real hindrance to true worship and to our faith. Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21). A man who is in love with material possessions cannot truly love God, (Lk. 12:15), and we do have to make a choice (Matt. 6:24).

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Which are we? There are people who make things happen, people who watch things happen, and people who don't know anything happened.



CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

Pilot Church of Christ	\$40.00
Mammoth Spring, Ar.	
Moko Church of Christ, Salem, Ar.	25.00
Church of Christ, Elizabeth, Ar.	15.00
Church of Christ, Moddy, Mo.	25.00
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CRUMBLING MORALITY

by Ted J. Clarke

The much advertised movie "Indecent Proposal" was just another in a long line of "indecent" offerings from Hollywood. I haven't seen it and won't, but the theme is obvious from the TV ads regarding the show. A husband and wife agree to let the wife crawl into an adulterous bed with a billionaire for the price of one million dollars. They reason that they can be happy the rest of their lives with the money, and besides, the wife really isn't doing it for love. Rather, she is doing it for a million dollars.

The movie plot is kind of like a real life event that happened in the life of the late atheistic philosopher Bertrand Russell. He told of being at a party one evening and making over a very attractive woman who was there. Russell asked her, "Will you go to bed with me for a million dollars?" She replied, "Of course." He asked her again, "Will you go to bed with me for \$10,000.00?" The woman hesitated and said, "Well... yes, I will." Russell asked her a third time, "Will you go to bed with me for \$10.00?" At this point the woman became indignant and angrily said, "What do you think I am?" With a grin Russell calmly said, "We've already established what you are. All that we are doing now is arguing about the price." The woman in the show "Indecent Proposal" is nothing more than a high priced prostitute, no matter how she and her husband may rationalize their actions. I don't know if the movie shows the stupidity of such immorality or not, but even if it does one should not pay the price of admission to promote the nudity and vulgarity that is likely portrayed on the screen.

Sexual immorality is set forth in the Bible as a very serious sin which will keep one out of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21). It ruins marriages, separates children from their parents, causes them to be raised without the benefit of a mother or father as a role model (Eph. 6:1-4), and greatly cheapens the sexual act which God placed in marriage as a beautiful and wonderful demonstration of love (1 Cor. 7:1-5). At the same time, sexual relationships outside of marriage are forbidden and destructive. Unless children are taught the Biblical truths about sex, they have no real guidelines other than their own desires about it. If we were to make our own decisions regarding the matter, then no one could say that the couple in the movie were wrong about what they did. God does not accept any reason for sexual activity outside marriage - not for love, lust, or a million dollars. Let God's word set the standard for your sexuality, not Hollywood!



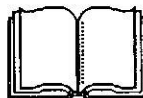
BOOK BLURBS

Recommended Reading

Gambling: National Pastime to Prosperity or Sure Bet to Poverty and Perdition? co-authored by Garland Elkins and Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

To supplement our feature article on gambling we are reviewing the above booklet by brethren Elkins and Taylor. This 53 page publication is an excellent treatise on the topic of gambling by two faithful servants of the Lord. It begins with some detailed definitions of what is involved in gambling, then discusses gambling as "big business." After a brief history of gambling, the authors take an extensive look at the problems gambling has caused in states where it has been legalized. Next, the booklet considers the problem of gambling addiction and the tremendous personal, family, and social problems caused by it. The authors continue their study with a Biblical look at the subject, citing several principles and Scriptures which relate to the topic, concluding that the Bible definitely teaches that it is wrong to be involved in gambling or to give support to it in any way. The concluding sections of the booklet look at honorable ways to earn money, what is not gambling, some ways people try to pervert the Bible to justify gambling, and how to avoid falling victim to the scourge of gambling.

The price of the booklet, which is printed in a tract format, is 60¢ for each copy (up to 25 copies), plus postage. For orders of 25 copies and over there is a 10% discount and the postage is paid. Why not order a supply of this attractive publication so that each member of your congregation can have a copy? Also, keep a supply on hand to give out to interested individuals to persuade them to join in the fight to stop legalized gambling in Arkansas or your state. Order from Taylor Publications, P. O. Box 464, Ripley, TN 38063, or call (901) 635-0263.



GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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