

Why to Oppose Gambling

By Pastor Mark Johnson, Independent Bible Church, Martinsburg, Posted October 17, 2009
<http://www.journal-news.net/page/content.detail/id/526550.html?nav=5142>

The voters of Jefferson County are to be commended for courageously defeating the expansion of gambling, especially when all three other counties in West Virginia that had similar votes waffled to the gaming lobby. Now the citizens of Jefferson County are being asked to vote again to permit the expansion of gambling.

Why is it important to continue to oppose the expansion of the gambling industry in our region? There are both practical and Biblical reasons. In practical terms, consider three common sense facts. First, gambling has a negative effect on our community. James Dobson, in "Gambling's Dirty Little Secrets" (April, 1999), rightly described the gambling industry as that which "destroys marriages, undermines the work ethic, increases crime, motivates suicide, destroys financial security of families... and dupes people into believing (it) will somehow benefit children."

Second, gambling creates addiction. Isn't it ironic that state tax dollars, which depend upon gambling, also pay for a hot line for addicts of gambling?

Third, the people who are most harmed by gambling are the poor who can least afford it. Gambling is profitable to the gaming industry and to our state. From whom do they make this profit? Most often, they take the profit from those who most need money and are therefore most vulnerable to wagering some of the little they have in hopes of somehow escaping poverty. This exploitation of the poor is inappropriate for a caring society.

Christians also need to consider Biblical reasons. While there is not a Bible verse that says, "you shall not wager on table games," consider these Biblical principles. First, gambling is motivated by greed. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil" (1 Timothy 6:9-10a). The desire to be rich is spiritually suicidal, but the gambling industry thrives off promoting the love of money.

Second, all that a Christian owns belongs to God-not just a tenth, everything! We are stewards or managers of God's resources. "(God) Himself gives to all life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:25). Faithful trustees may not wager from a trust fund. All we

have, as human beings is a trust fund from God. We will answer to him for how we handle what he has entrusted to us. How irresponsible to wager his money! By the way, we should evaluate everything we do with our (God's) money.

Third, Biblical economics rewards labor, not a system based on exploiting others. The godly lifestyle is: Let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has a need (Ephesians 4:28b). God's kind of person is a worker and a giver, not a taker. Promoting the get-rich-quick something-for-nothing philosophy of gambling undercuts the Biblical work ethic that helped make this country great.

Vote no on expanding gambling.