

GAMBLING - THE SUBTLE SIN

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, Stewardship Director
GAMBLING IS SUBTLE THEFT

The money we possess is not ours. It belongs to God. Understanding this, Christian stewards endeavor to manage the money God has given them according to His will. Gambling is not only bad stewardship, it is a subtle form of theft, which robs a vast majority to benefit a few. Defined, theft is obtaining something at the loss of someone else. Gambling is exactly that. Someone must lose for another to win. This is subtle theft - a sin.

WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

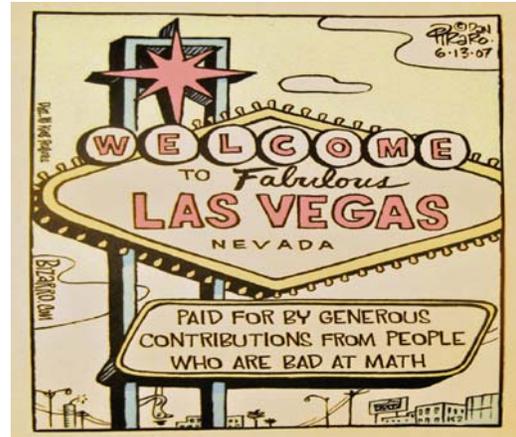
The Ohio Lottery has a PR slogan: "ODDS ARE YOU'LL HAVE FUN" The saying could be entered in a lawsuit for false advertising. The fundamental truth is: "THE ODDS ARE YOU'LL LOSE AND LOSING IS NO FUN." A March 6, 2007, report by the Cleveland Plain Dealer indicated "the odds of winning a mega million prize of \$355 million is 175,711,536 to 1". The odds, of course, always favor the gambling operators. Casino owners never lose money. Players do. Losers are figured in to allow for predetermined wins to provide a healthy profit for operators. Gambling is usually "GETTING NOTHING FOR SOMETHING" - unless you're running the show.

GAMBLING ADDS NO ECONOMIC VALUE TO SOCIETY

State lotteries and casino groups couple gambling with resultant benefits such as education, byproduct business opportunities, jobs, tax benefits, etc. This intrusion of "the end justifies the means" muddies minds. Bank robbers who give some of their stolen money to good causes do not exonerate theft to make it right. Gambling is subtle theft. The end does not justify the means. An April, 1996, Reader's Digest article, "Gambling's Toll in Minnesota," warned: "Gambling adds no economic value to society."

GAMBLING CATERS TO BASER HUMAN INSTINCTS

Human beings have a tendency to rationalize themselves into improper behavior. Some claim they gamble for recreation and don't care



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if they win or lose? Really? If that's the case, why not have fun playing monopoly with funny money? But monopoly isn't the same, now, is it? What's the difference? Could it be greed? Others, again, rationalize: "All of life is a gamble; so what's the big deal about playing the slots?" Comparing apples to oranges is bad rationale. Such rationalizations cloud the basic issue of gambling as an immoral, anti-societal activity catering to baser human instincts and fueling the fire of greed.

"WIN-WIN" VS. "LOSE-WIN"

A "Win-Win" societal process is essential for economic stability. In "Win-Win" situations, gain is reciprocal. Everyone is a winner. For example, when a person works for wages, both the employer and employee are winners. The worker gets wages and the employer receives rendered services. Not so in gambling. The "Lose-Win" nature of gambling necessitates losers. Getting something at the loss of someone else is an immoral act even for those who claim they are gambling just for fun. It is unfortunate that some churches actually educate people to gamble through bingo, raffles and carnival gambling - subtle forms of theft!

A STERN WARNING

"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1 Tim. 6:10)

ADDICTED TO GAMBLING?

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