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HIDDEN TRAP

INTRODUCTION: Edward grew up in Anderson Ferry, Ohio as one of four children to Harry and LaVerne. Edward was encouraged as a young boy to participate in sports. His father, who played semiprofessional football, was the biggest influence on Edward and his sports career.

But Edward loved baseball and spent his childhood playing the game. As a teen he played baseball at Western Hills High School. Edward played well enough to be offered a contract with a minor league team in Geneva, New York. In just a couple of years, he landed on a major league team.

When I was in my own early teen years, Edward was a regular at second base and his baseball card became one of the most popular among my friends. He hit .273 that season and played in nearly every game. He was rewarded for his efforts by being named National League Rookie of the Year.

Edward continued to flourish over the next ten years. He consistently batted over .300 and, during this time, he played on four league champions and two World Series winners. While in Seminary, I didn't have much time or interest in keeping up with baseball, but I could not help but notice that in a single year, Edward was named the World Series Most Valuable Player, Sports Illustrated Sportsman of the Year and The Sporting News Man of the Year.

But sports was not the only thing Edward learned from his dad. He later recounted how at a young age, his dad would sneak him off to the horse track to accompany him as he bet on the ponies. He described how his young mind was drawn by the atmosphere and energy of the track. As a teenager and a young adult, he seemed to use the track medicinally, as he sought sanctuary there to escape from the pressures of life. As his baseball career advanced, so did his gambling addiction.

At age 43, Peter Edward Rose became a player/manager for the Cincinnati Reds. On September 11, of the following year, Pete established his place in baseball history when he set the all-time major league hit record of 4,192, breaking Hall of Famer Ty Cobb's mark of 4,191. In fact, last Sunday, the ball Rose hit to break the record sold at auction for \$403,000.

Pete totaled an amazing 4,256 hits by the time of his retirement. During those years of sports hero success and celebrity status, Rose's addiction evolved to the point that the only thing that captured his attention was his scorecard and racing form.

Rose retired from playing baseball after the 1986 season, but he continued as manager from 1985 to 1988, leading the Reds to 4 consecutive 2nd place finishes, and was considered by many to be one of the best managers in baseball.

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Then, on February 20, 1989, baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth confronted Rose with evidence that he had placed bets on baseball. Despite Rose's denial, he was permanently banned from the game. Fifteen years later, with the same abandon he showed in diving headfirst into second base, Rose sought redemption by admitting that he bet on the Cincinnati Reds while he was managing them. But while he conceded he technically violated rule 21, which strictly prohibits players from gambling on baseball games, he argues he did not dishonor the spirit of the rule. Rose maintains he never took an unfair advantage on the inside information he was privy to as a manager. Therefore, he was not corrupt. And with the less than subtle irony that often accompanies addicts' explanations of bad choices, Rose claimed he believed that corruption was the only vice that the anti-gambling rule was designed to prohibit. In fact, Pete Rose frankly admitted that he still continued to gamble.

Jeffrey L. Syrios, a freelance writer and attorney from Wichita, Kansas said this "And it is within this paradox of Rose's life that we see the hellish nature of gambling addiction. Rose was born with the gift of baseball. It is his life. It is his identity. His performance clearly qualifies him for the Hall of Fame--an honor that has become his life goal and means more to him than anything. But yet he cannot stop doing that which stole his youth and now threatens to steal his game. Worse yet, his addicted mind has become so clouded, and his perspective so bent, that he cannot understand that it is by his walk and not his talk that he continues to be judged. But that is the way of a man in denial. It is what can be expected of an addict who is trapped and cornered, and is wildly searching for the quickest excuse that will allow an escape to the safety of the next corner. Baseball will not forgive Rose. Spring will not arrive for this boy of summer. Addiction has stolen his dream with the same tenacity that Pete Rose stole home." [\(The above story is taken directly or adapted from the biography of Pete Rose on peterose.com and from the article by Jeffrey L. Syrios found on family.org.\)](#)

If we took a vote today, it might be split on whether Pete Rose should be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, but I think almost everyone would agree his story is tragic.

And while many people would denounce Rose's breaking of the rule against betting on his own team and then lying about it for years, not nearly as many would be willing to say a critical word about the real root of Pete's problem. The reason is that only a minority of people view gambling as a hidden trap.

In fact in America today, **67% of adults believe that gambling is morally acceptable.** That means the message I am bringing you today from God's Word is not going to be overly popular with people at large. And it may not be much more popular right here in this worship center. Because the pollsters say that **58% of people between the age of 23 and 41 who describe themselves as born again believe that gambling is morally acceptable.**

I am going to tell you plainly today, that is not what God says in His Word. And to those of you who are already somewhat antagonized that I am preaching on this today, may I beg your indulgence for just a little while. Because my purpose is not to condemn you

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or to chew you up and spit you out by the time I am done. My desire is to help you, to show you something in the Scriptures that could keep you from letting gambling do to you and those you love exactly what it did to Pete Rose and to countless other people in our world.

Let me start by admitting to you right up front that if you do a concordance search on the word gamble or gambling in the NKJV of the Bible, you will not find a single verse. However, if you will listen and open your heart as well as your ears and mind, I will share with you several principles that speak directly to the issue of gambling and reveal God's thoughts about this matter.

Therefore, to organize these principles, let me ask this question: **What reasons do the Scriptures offer as to why we should not gamble?**

I. BECAUSE GAMBLING DEMONSTRATES A LACK OF TRUST IN GOD

A. God is to be the source of our provision.

1. By His gifts
2. By His enabling us to work

Deuteronomy 8:18-19 And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

B. Gambling causes us to

- **look away from God for what we need** and
- **look to luck for what we want.**

Isaiah 65:11-12 11 "But **you are those who forsake the LORD**, who forget My holy mountain, **Who prepare a table for Gad**, And **who furnish a drink offering for Meni**. 12 Therefore I will number you for the sword, And you shall all bow down to the slaughter; Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose *that* in which I do not delight."

a) Who is Gad?

Gad is the pagan deity of fortune or luck.

b) Who is Meni?

Meni is the pagan god of numbers or destiny.

c) God says when you choose

- **fortune,**
- **destiny, and**
- **Lady Luck**

rather than trusting Him,

you choose that in which He does not delight.

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- a) When we gamble we are turning away from God's provision to look to fate and fortune to provide what we want or think we need.
 - 1) We are saying, "God, I will not trust You; Your provision is inadequate."
 - 2) We are saying, "God, I will not trust You; I do not wish to receive Your provision through work."
 - 3) We are saying, "God, I will not trust You; I will not leave this with You in prayer."
 - 4) We are saying, "I would rather turn to the false gods of fortune and destiny to get what I want."
- b) Objection: That is not what I am saying when I buy a powerball ticket!
Think about this with me for a minute.
How much is a powerball ticket? How do you know?
- c) **You spend \$2 for a powerball ticket.**
 - **Are you just blessing the government?**
 - **Are you purposefully contributing to someone else?**
 - **Or do you hope you win?**
- d) You hope to win hundreds of millions of dollars, right?
- e) By your purchase you are saying, "I want a millions of dollars more than what God has chosen so far to entrust to me."

Either you are saying

- **I believe God wants me to have it, but**
 - **I am not willing to let God give it by my labor and**
 - **I am not willing to wait for God to give it as a gift or**
- **I do not believe God intends me to have it but**
 - **I intend to try to get it anyway by the chance pick of a number**

In doing this, we are trusting fortune, destiny, or luck, but we are not trusting God.

I believe that gambling is not pleasing to the Lord

II. BECAUSE GAMBLING IS POOR STEWARDSHIP

1 Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

- A. All we possess belongs to God.**
- B. The beginning of stewardship is the tithe.**
- C. The next step of stewardship is giving God an offering.**
- D. But really being the steward God made us to be means spending all of the money God gives us in ways pleasing to Him.**
 - providing your needs
 - providing for your family
 - doing good

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NOT

- Wasting money by risking it at incredibly low odds
 - Les Krantz in What the Odds Are says that you are far more likely to be struck by lightning than to win the lottery.
 - Remember, if you hear that someone won a \$340 million, other someones lost that \$340 million he won plus \$660 million because only 34% of the income from the tickets sold goes to the jackpot. For one guy to win \$340 million, a total of \$1 billion has to be lost by others that then goes to the operators, the expenses, and to the government.
 - If the odds were not stacked against you, the opportunity to gamble would not be available!
- Every dollar a person spends on gambling is a dollar they misused as a steward.

III. BECAUSE GAMBLING OFTEN LEADS TO OTHER CRISES AND SINS

Romans 6:1-2 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

A. When gambling becomes a pattern in a household, divorce often follows.

I was a pastor in Slidell, LA for 19 years. Our next door neighbor to the east was Harrison County, MS. When the casinos moved onto the Gulf Coast of Harrison County, the number of divorces nearly tripled in the years that followed. (Mississippi State Department of Health, "Vital Statistics Mississippi" for the years 1991-1998.)

B. Even when divorce does not occur, domestic violence often does.

Domestic violence shelters on Mississippi's Gulf Coast reported increases in requests for assistance ranging from 100 to 300 percent after the introduction of casinos. (National Gambling Impact Study Commission Final Report, p. 7-27)

C. Some gamblers become compulsive gamblers.

- Not paying bills due.
- Not paying debts owed.
- Not providing for one's family properly.

IV. BECAUSE OUR GAMBLING CAN CAUSE OTHERS TO STUMBLE

1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

A. You may gamble but not be compulsive.

- You still trusted fortune instead of God.
- You still were a poor steward with what you spent on gambling.
- But maybe your sin will not progress beyond that point.

B. What about those who trust your judgment and model your life?

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Spouse, children, grandchildren, friends

C. Taking the position that there is nothing wrong with a little gambling is especially dangerous for your children.

Ronald A. Reno writes, "The next generation is the first in modern American history to grow up in an era when gambling is legally sanctioned and culturally approved. Tragically, adolescents have proven extremely susceptible to the enticements of gambling, and are becoming hooked at rates even greater than their adult counterparts. Scholars and researchers caution that we may only be seeing the "tip of the iceberg," and that the seeds of destruction being sown in these young lives today portend immense individual and cultural devastation" in the 21st century."

A survey of 12,000 sixth through twelfth graders found that 86% had gambled.

The ease of access to online gambling makes this temptation a greater danger to the online generations today. No longer does a person have to travel to a casino or to a horse track or dog track.

While I was searching some of the statistics I have shared with you this morning, I stumbled onto this ad: If you're looking for something that's a little more exciting to play than the online slot game and if you want something that's a little less technical and emotionally draining than poker, you should play online video poker. It's simple, it's enjoyable and, most importantly, it can provide you with hours and hours of excitement. When you get more skilled, you'll also begin to notice certain patterns and will soon begin to plot strategic moves that will help you win more. If it's just money you're interested in, then the progressive video poker games are definitely the ones for you, who knows, a simple royal flush and a lucky spin could help you walk away from the game a multimillionaire. If you want to play, have a look at the games found at the best online casinos and Mobile Casinos featured in our toplist.

CONCLUSION: In spite of these biblical principles I have shown you today, some of you may still be saying, "I don't see anything wrong with gambling." Just don't try to tell Kathy Bassett in Topeka, Kansas.

You see the day was chilly on this Dec. 29 in rural Kansas. Kathy's brother, David, sat by his father's grave writing a note to his wife whom he had sent to celebrate a late Christmas gathering with her family. He said in his note that if his family knew the pain, desperation and shame he woke up with every morning, they would not want him to have to go on. David was a licensed counselor with a Master's degree who manned gambling and suicide hotlines, but he also was a man with a secret gambling addiction.

His wife said it all began on a trip to Vegas. They did not go there to gamble but they did a little just for fun. David played a slot machine and won. It wasn't a huge

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amount of money, but it was a win; and David was hooked. When he returned home he started going to the casinos close to Topeka.

The rewards club offerings enticed David to go just to receive the little incentive gift, but then he would end up gambling, sometimes thousands of dollars in a night. Eventually he came to a point where he absolutely hated the casinos, but he couldn't stop himself anymore. As a mental health professional, he was very aware of his addiction and was humiliated by it.

With his wife out of town, David traveled to the cemetery where the father he revered was buried. He took his shotgun, a memento from brighter days with his dad and his only firearm. He put the gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

But that is not all. Kathy's mother had her condo paid off and retirement set until she started visiting the casinos. She lost everything she had, and now at age 73 had to go back to work to pay off a \$1600 a month bankruptcy judgment - a direct result of her gambling addiction.

Kathy's son was attracted to the gambling as well. He went to work for Harrah's Casinos. He made good money, but not good enough to support his own gambling and other things he wanted to do. So he started embezzling from the casino. Naturally he got caught, and Harrah's went for the jugular. It was his first offense, but he got a maximum sentence in the state pen.

The Bassett family story is a consummate synopsis of the

**ABC's of gambling
Addiction, Bankruptcy, and Crime**

(Story quoted and adapted from ["The True Face of Gambling" ncalg.org.](http://ncalg.org))

Like I said, some of you may still be saying, "I don't see anything wrong with gambling." Just don't try to convince Kathy Bassett, and don't try to convince God. They know better.