

Personal Questions that the Bible Answers

Is it sinful for us to gamble?

Before I define “gambling,” and before we consider it possible to be *sinful*, it’ll be good to learn for you to determine what “gambling” is to you. Try defining it in a few words. . .

I believe that *this* is a pretty good definition: Gambling is risking a wager, on a game, in order to win a prize.

Please take my poll. Nod or say “Yes” if: (1) you like to gamble; (2) you don’t like to gamble; (3) you like to gamble but you don’t gamble; (4) you don’t like to gamble but you do gamble. . . What do you make of your four responses? . . .

I’ve defined “gambling.” In order to learn whether it’s a “sin,” it’s helpful to agree on what makes something a “sin” in the first place.

Q. How would you define “sin”? . . . **A.** It’s an immoral act that’s considered a transgression against *divine* law.

Here’s another way to define sin: It’s doing something that God says is immoral to do. Yes? . . . So, when the Bible says, “*You shall not steal*” or “*You shall not commit adultery*,” then to steal or commit adultery would be sinful. Yes? . . .

It’s important to realize that gambling is a **secondary issue**.^{*} Oftentimes, Christians become divided over it. However, because gambling isn’t a **primary**^{*} issue, let’s agree to disagree about it. 😊

Okay, we sin when we do what we’re not to do. **Q.** Do you think that the Bible also says that sin is a matter of **not doing** what you’re **supposed to do**? . . . Yes? . . . No?

A. Read **James 4:17**: “*If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.*” Ever sinned that way?

What does the [Parable of the Talents \(or Bags of Gold\)](#) tell us? [Read [Warren's commentary](#) on this popular parable: one master, three servants, “5, 2, and 1 talent,” two rewards, one castigation]

[James 4:17](#) helps us answer today's question correctly. It makes it important to know **if** gambling is a sin. It suggests that, in the **absence** of clear commands from God, something can **still be a sin** for people. What do you think, so far, of James' advisory?

Q. Do you agree with this next possible situation? If you know in your gut that you're doing something wrong **or** that you're not doing something right, then that's sinful. . . Yes? . . . No? . . .

See if you agree with this concept: *“In the absence of clear commands from God, something can still be a sin for people.”*

I've got a True or False question to ask: **Q.** If the Bible doesn't declare unconditionally that “gambling is a sin,” we can safely say, “Therefore, gambling isn't a sin.” . . . True? . . . False? . . .

Gambling has taken many forms throughout history, from ancient games of dice and cards to billion-dollar state lotteries, cruise-ship gaming opportunities, and sports betting apps. You have ever gambled in any of those activities, right? [Ha, ha, ha.]

Let's get back to focusing on our Bible. **Q.** Do you know if the Old and/or New Testament cites “gambling” as a sin? **A.** All bets are off! Although the Bible never actually calls gambling a sin, it gives us principles that wisely guide us. Let's look at a few now.

We'll start with what Apostle Matthew wrote in his Sermon on the Mount. His one verse makes it absolutely clear that gambling can put a person in a position of being mastered by addiction and debts. **Matthew 6:24's** principle needs to be front and center for every Christian *considering* gambling. Read [Matt. 6:24](#).

I'm now going to "up the ante" by asking you this next question.

Q. Can you successfully worship God, while also worshipping money? . . . **A.** No! Serving God and money is incompatible!

Another question to answer: **Q.** Does the Bible warn us against the compulsion to "strike it rich"? . . . **A.** The answer is found in two verses that Apostle Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy. Read [1 Tim. 6:9-10 NIV](#) . . . Now read it in [The Message](#).

Q. What serious lesson do Paul's words to Timothy teach *us*?
A. The compulsion to "strike it rich" *often* leads to two destructive outcomes: spiritual destruction **and** physical destruction. Yes?

Gambling, obviously, is a high-risk way to try to get rich. Sure, some people do hit jackpots or win various games of chance. But . . . casinos wouldn't be in business if most of its gamblers made money! The odds are *against* people winning! A Christian who gambles *uncontrollably* is bound to suffer physical and spiritual destruction. **Q.** What's *your* level of controllability?

Look at these two opposing biblical accounts of "getting rich quick." First, the Bible says that *get-rich-quick schemes* and *dishonest gains* are warned against. Read [Proverb 13:11](#).

On the other hand, hard work and contentment are seen as noble and rewarding. Read [Ecclesiastes 5:10](#); then read [2 Thessalonians 3:10](#). Also read this encouraging verse: [Hebrews 13:5](#). What's your take on these encouraging verses?

I hope you see what I see in all five passages on this page: The love of money is depicted as being in direct competition against God, in regard to our allegiance to him. That said: Whatever decisions you make with money, you'll want to make it extremely clear where your true allegiance lies.

While the Bible doesn't explicitly mention gambling, it mentions events of "luck" or "chance." For example, casting lots was God's prescribed method of making choices. The apostles cast lots to determine who'd replace Judas ([Acts 1:26](#)) and soldiers threw dice to win Jesus' garments ([John 19:23–24 NLT](#)). **Note:** The throwing of dice in John's passage can't justify our playing craps in Reno!

For Christians, money should always be seen as a means to a far more important end, such as honoring God. So, let's cash in our chips and take to heart Solomon's wise saying: [Prov. 3:9–10](#).

The Bible doesn't specifically condemn gambling, betting, or playing the lottery; it warns us against the *love* of gambling and the *love* of money. Gambling tempts us with the enticement to gain quick-and-easy riches. When done in moderation and only on occasion, gambling certainly becomes a waste of money. But, it's not necessarily evil or sinful.



Question: Is it sinful for us to gamble?

Answer: Although some people experience gambling as being *rewarding and fun*, it can become highly addictive and potentially ruinous. While the Bible doesn't call gambling a sin, it warns against get-rich-quick schemes and attempts to "hit the jackpot."

Gambling focuses on "the love of money," which is the root of all kinds of evil. It tempts people with the promise of quick and easy riches. In short, gambling is poor stewardship of our God-given resources. A Christian shouldn't get involved in gambling or in other forms of *materialism*.

When gambling opportunities arise for us, we Christians should immediately ask Jesus, "*What do you recommend I do, Lord?*" Then, **we must do what he says!** Amen.

* Open and print Warren's "[Primary and Secondary Theologies](#)."