

In and Out
#10: Into Risk, But Not of It
July 14-16, 2007

And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?
Matthew 16:26 NLT

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1 Timothy 6:6-11 TNIV

Introduction: Perhaps the most pressing issue facing believers in our culture is how to live “in the world, but not of it.” This is especially true for a church like Columbia in a place like Metro Washington. In a culture addicted to all varieties of gambling, we must learn to be “into risk, but not of it.”

I. Society and Gambling

A. America is a gaming culture.

1. State lotteries, horse-racing, slots, etc. abound (47 of the 50 states now host lotteries).
2. Las Vegas is the fastest-growing American city and the number one recreational destination.
3. Over 800 billion dollars annually are wagered legally in the United States alone (this does not even account for private and illegal gambling).
4. Americans spend over twice as much annually on gambling than on education.
5. Americans now spend more on gambling than on groceries.
6. Polls reveal that over 61% of Americans gamble (including 2/3 of teenagers), and 6% of our population are addicted to gambling.

B. But gambling is more than just gaming.

1. Former Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Arthur Levitt likened some forms of stock trading to casino gambling.
2. The present home loan crises obviously reveals that many have gambled and lost.
3. In fact, any “investment” of time, talent, or resources without a “reasonable expectation of return” can be considered gambling.

II. Sin and Gambling

A. There is no Scriptural injunction against gambling, per se, though the Bible often advises against such risk.

Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.

Proverbs 13:11 NLT

B. Nonetheless, gambling clearly violates God’s intention for humanity.

1. Gambling depends upon “luck” rather than God’s sovereign providence.
2. Gambling is driven by greed and covetousness.
3. Gambling is based in deception.
4. Gambling countermines the God-ordained role of government to protect citizens and oppose evil.
5. Gambling is predicated upon the hope of gain at the loss of others.
6. Gambling undermines order/encourages anarchy.
7. Gambling subverts God’s work ethic.
8. Gambling exploits the poor.
9. Gambling is terrible stewardship!

C. Gambling ties us to this world and is difficult to defend as a means of honoring God, and Christians are wise to avoid it.

III. Risks Worth Taking

Conclusion: Obviously, life as God has designed it involves considerable risk, else we would not term following Jesus “a leap of faith.” God does not call us to a life of caution, but He does ask us to take risks that honor and glorify Him. Life without Christ is the most dangerous wager, but gambling is a tremendous risk for followers of Jesus.