

Why Is Gambling Wrong? [continued]

by Bill Crews

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money into the office “football pool,” that is gambling. When you flip a coin to see who pays for the drinks or the dinner, that is gambling. When you play games of bingo or lotto, games that require you to pay to play, and you are playing for a prize worth far more than it will cost you to play, that is gambling. When you bet on anything which requires you to risk some money in hopes of winning much more money than you stand to lose, that is gambling. And of course gambling can be done in a hotel room, or in someone’s house, or at the office or the shop or the plant, or at a sporting event where you are either a spectator or a participant, as well as in a gambling establishment — a race track, a gambling casino, a betting parlor, with a “bookie,” or in any place of business where they have slot machines, video poker machines, or sell “lottery” tickets. And gambling is wrong and detrimental to the individual and society, whether it involves a small amount of money or a large amount of money. Because a portion of the proceeds go to benefit some charitable organization or some church only makes it worse, rather than making it all right.

The Total Amount That People Gamble

To what extent do people indulge in gambling? Here are some quotations from a newspaper article that appeared in 1999:

“Never before have bettors blown so much money — a whopping \$50.9 billion last year — five times the amount lost in 1980. That’s more than the public spent on movies, theme parks, recorded music and sporting events combined.”

“Studies place the total number of compulsive gamblers at about 4.4 million, about equal to the nation’s ranks of hard-core drug addicts. Another 11 million, known as problem gamblers, teeter on the verge.”

“Compulsive gambling has been linked to child abuse, domestic violence, embezzlement, bogus insurance claims, bankruptcies, welfare fraud and a host of other social and criminal ills.”

“‘If this were a children’s toy, it would be pulled off the market immediately,’ University of Illinois economics Professor Earl Grinols says of gambling. ‘We would not tolerate it.’”

“‘Thirty-seven states now run their own lotteries and spend millions on seductive advertisements.’ “‘When the cigarette industry did this with Joe Camel, the country was outraged,’ says Valerie Lorenz, executive director of the Compulsive Gambling Center in Baltimore. ‘Now our government is doing it.’” The article also mentions the political clout of the gambling industry through their lobbying efforts and campaign contributions. It also addresses such problems as increases in domestic violence and child abuse, increases in business bankruptcies, increases in felony crimes (robberies, burglaries, insurance frauds, embezzlements, arson and even murder) by some gamblers in their desperate desire to secure more money to gamble or to cover gambling losses, suicides and attempted suicides. Any government that turns to gambling to secure money to pay for its services is sooner or later going to discover that in the end it always costs more than it pays.

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