

THE GUIDELINE

Psalm 31:3

LOTTO FEVER

As we sat at the gas pumps waiting for the tank to fill, I noticed a van pull into the very front parking space of the convenient store. The van sat there for a good bit before anyone exited it. Finally the door opened, and slowly emerging from it was an older, poorly dressed, overweight lady who could barely walk. She hobbled into the store and was in there for just a minute. She emerged from the store with one item in her hand- a lottery ticket. By then, I was interested to see if she would do what most people do when they buy one of those things, and I can only assume that she did, as I could not see into her vehicle. She sat there for another minute or so and then drove off. Ah, yes! Another loss to the dreaded scratch off lottery ticket! The lady was obviously near retirement and seemed to have health difficulties. She was probably on a fixed income, yet she was throwing money to the wind. But this is the typical target of lotteries, poor or low income folks. Listen to an actual store front vendor, "It is really sad. I have people come in here and spend \$25 or \$50 buying tickets and playing the numbers. The people who do this aren't well-to-do. They're poor. They can't afford it. Some are on public assistance. You'll get the occasional guy in a business suit, but he buys one ticket. The ones who buy dozens are the ones who are really desperate." In Tennessee you can buy a lottery ticket for a \$1 up to \$30. If someone making minimum wage purchases a thirty dollar ticket, that is more than half of their pay for a day. In a Fox News report, Les Bernal, national director of 'Stop Predatory Gambling' said; "Lotteries run aggressive marketing campaigns to lure low-income people to buy tickets." He also said; "Over the next eight years, the American people are going to lose more than \$1 trillion of personal wealth to commercialized gambling, at least half of which is being extracted by state lotteries."

There is also another negative to playing the lottery that must be mentioned —it can be addictive. I want to share a story I found in a tract concerning the lottery, "...My wife and I stopped at a store that sold lotto tickets. As an older lady took our credit card, I asked her if I bought a lottery ticket would it be gambling. She gave a half smile, asked if I really wanted to know the truth, and when I assured I could take it, she replied that yes, I would be gambling. Well, at least I had her opinion, and was about to thank her when I thought of another question. I asked how she was so certain I would be gambling. She replied thoughtfully, "Well, for one reason, it says on the back of the ticket that if you have a problem with gambling, you can call the 1-800 number they give." I got the exact wording. It says, "If you or someone you know has a gambling problem call 1-800-742-0443." I called the number and told them to please send the information they had available. They sent a manuscript called, "Summary of Calls to Texas Council on Problem & Compulsive Gambling Help line." There "Lottery" was listed right along with Bingo, Sports betting, (you Christians reading this and think you can play ball game cards at work should repent j.c.) Casino, Horse racing, Cards, Dice, Dog racing, Video poker, and other things. There was a chart which showed what type of "gambling problems" people reported most.

The lottery lead with 73%...” I have witnessed the addictive nature of gambling first hand. I once had a supervisor who lived in Kentucky and commuted to Manchester to work. He would go home every weekend to Kentucky. On Monday, he would return to work penniless and would often borrow money in order to buy food. One Monday, I noticed as he came through the break room on his way to the office he stopped at the trash can and emptied his pockets which were full of horse race tickets. He eventually lost all that he had, even his life! That is the reality of gambling! The odds are always stacked against you. Bernal, in his Fox News interview, tells a similar story of an older lady buying thousands of dollars worth of lottery tickets, “ She kept the stacks of losing tickets year after year. Now she’s near retirement age, she’s still working long hours, but she is still living month to month financially,” He also states that; “More than 40 million Americans are experiencing harm caused by the greed of big gambling operators, and each one of them has a personal story that breaks your heart.”

As Christians we do not oppose something just to be opposing it. We oppose a thing because it is sinful, contrary to the word of God and damning to your soul. Gambling is one such thing. Consider the following: 1. Gambling breaks the golden rule to do unto others as you would have them do to you (Matthew 7:12). 2. It violates God’s commanded work ethic, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians 4:28) And Paul says, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Gambling encourages a way out of honest work. 3. Gambling is wrong because it violates God’s law on stewardship. A good steward must be honest and faithful, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

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Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2) There are several other things I could list, but let these suffice. Whatever God has graciously blessed us with should not be wasted or squandered. The gambler is guilty of such wastefulness and has more to lose than material possessions!†

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