Don't Bet On **IT**

**IT** Could Cost You Everything

Whenever Paul preached, there was always either a revival, or a riot!  When the Word is preached, Some will take it as the greatest truth ever told and some will be ready to fight.

It is important to know that these people had made a lot of money as a result of their worship of Diana.  If you really want to offend someone, talk about their money.  His preaching hurt their business…selling statues and shrines to Diana…and when people got saved, they renounced these false gods, and didn’t buy them.

I don’t know about you but something changed in me when I got saved. I didn’t have the same mindset anymore. I didn’t view things in the same manor anymore; I had a new heart and a new set of eyes.

Well, a riot ensued, and about 25k people filled the local amphitheater in opposition to Paul.

**Acts 19:23–29 (NIV84)** 23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen.

25 He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: “Men, you know we receive a good income from this business.

26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all.

27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater.

The big problem in all of this is how Demetrius is leading people to believe in something for all the wrong reasons…mostly from a profit motive.  And he is a master of rationalizing it, and giving them “good reason” to feel ok with what they’re doing.

In 1908, Carlisle institute and Harvard University were football rivals.  The Harvard coach believed in a straight-forward, hard hitting game…he depended upon the basics.

But the coach at Carlisle was different, he depended upon the razzle dazzle…trick plays, ways to bend the rules to his advantage…well, the week before Carlisle was to play Harvard,

They played Syracuse, and when they came out on the field, Coach Warner of Carlisle came up w/ an ingenious scheme which won them the game.  He took brown material, the same shade as a football,

Cut that mat’l into shapes like a football, same size, and had them sewn on the jerseys of his offensive players.  So, when all 11 men were out there on the field, it looked like they all had a football!

He had checked the rules, and had found out it was not against the rules.

It wasn’t breaking the letter of the law, but it certainly broke the spirit of the law…violating the principles of good sportsmanship…

Well, the next week, they faced Harvard.  The day before the game, the Harvard coach met w/ Coach Warner and said, listen, are you gonna use those trick jerseys tomorrow?  “There’s nothing in the rule book against it!”

Ok, he said, no problem.  The next day, Carlisle trotted onto the field, complete w/ their trick jerseys…then Harvard came out w/ their crimson red jerseys on.  Of course, the home team, Harvard had to supply the footballs.  When they pulled the first ball out of the bag, it was crimson red!

Kinda like the kid told to sit down by parents,  “I may be sitting on the outside, but I’m standing on the inside!”

Now, before we go any further, let me say there is not a passage in the Bible that specifically says, “Do not gamble.” There is also not a passage that says, “Don’t do drugs” but we know the widespread destruction they cause.

Let’s admit it, everyone would like to be wealthy, but we’ll see in this session that it matters to God how we get wealth and why we want to be wealthy.

So let’s look at just a few of the wrong assumptions that lead to gambling.

**1. If I win lots of money I won’t ever have to worry again.**

Actually, Paul said your worries have only begun if your goal in life is to be rich:

**1 Timothy 6:9–10 (NKJV)** 9But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The word “snare” means a trap or noose. Many people view money as a magic rope by which they can climb out of all their problems, only to have that same rope choke the life out of them like a noose!

If Mankind’s “love of money” leads to “all kinds of evils” then we should be extremely cautious of anything (including gambling) that would feed our misguided “desire to be rich.”

**Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV)** 22 The blessing of the Lord makes *one* rich,

And He adds no sorrow with it.

**Proverbs 15:16 (The Message)** 16A simple life in the Fear-of-God is better than a rich life with a ton of headaches.

Listen to a few stories of people who HIT IT BIG, They show the “temptation, ruin and destruction” that often comes with the desire to “get rich quick.”

William Post won $16.2 million in the Pennsylvania lottery in 1988 but now lives on his Social Security. He later said, "I wish it never happened. It was totally a nightmare." A former girlfriend successfully sued him for a share of his winnings.

It wasn't his only lawsuit. His brother was arrested for hiring a hit man to kill him, hoping to inherit a share of the winnings. Within a year, he was $1 million in debt. Now he lives quietly on $450 a month and food stamps.

One Southeastern family won $4.2 million, and eleven years later, the couple divorced, sold the house and they split what was left of the lottery proceeds. The wife got a very small house.

The husband moved in with the kids. Even the life insurance they bought ended up getting cashed in. Their financial advisor said, "It wasn’t the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow [they had hoped for]."

Gambling is simply one person trying to get into others pockets, without any discipline to earn the money.

Larry Burkett, “gambling consumes, but it doesn’t produce.  It creates no new money, and no new goods.”

**2. If I win lots of money I won’t ever have to work again.**

**Genesis 2:15 (NIV84)** 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

The very first man that God ever created had a job and a purpose. God never intended for people to sit around and do nothing.

Everyone in this room dreams of relaxing on some tropical paradise place where everyone serves you and you don’t lift a finger. That sounds nice and is fine for a vacation, but were not created to sit around and do nothing.

An Idle mind is the devils playground…..

Proverbs 19:15 “Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.”

Proverbs 20:4 “The sluggard does not plow in the autumn, he will seek at harvest and have nothing.””

Proverbs 15:19 “The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.”

When you depend on hard work and the blessings of God; the path to success is a wide-open highway! The irony of gambling is that most people will never hit it big and they end up working harder to fund their gambling habit.

**3. I can win God’s approval by giving part of the money to the church.**

That is exactly what Jack Whittaker thought. He won $113 million in a Christmas Day drawing. He donated more than $7 million to three churches in West Virginia and California.

He sounds like a great guy doesn’t he? But listen to the rest of his story:

One night when he was at a West Virginia strip club, Whittaker opened his briefcase filled with $545,000 in cash and cashier's checks in front of a club employee. He was soon drugged, and the briefcase was stolen. The money was recovered, and two club employees were arrested.

But the incident put a spotlight on Whittaker's habits, which police said included frequent strip-club visits and high-stakes gambling at a dog track and casino. Whittaker said his 16yr old granddaughter lost almost all of her friends.

He went on to say, "She's the most bitter 16-year-old I know. She doesn't communicate with almost anybody but me." By Ellen Goodstein, Bankrate.com

In then we have our own justification process we go through of why we are participating anyway……

The devil pops in w/ his always present version of the situation…his lie, mixed w/ truth, to deceive:

This will benefit education, this will build roads, etc.  No, it’s just another government tax…as the poor become even poorer as they try their luck.  If you want to give to education, do it directly!

**Proverbs 15:16** “Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.”

**Proverbs 16:8** “Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.”

**Luke 16:11** [Jesus said] “If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?”

What percent of your money actually belongs to God?  Some think 10%, but it’s really 100% His.

Good stewardship says, don’t throw your money away.  That would be wrong!  So is gambling w/ God’s money.

If you heard the church was gambling with their money, you’d throw a fit! You would say I can’t believe you would do that with God’s money. Who’s money are you playing with? “That’s God’s money”!

Some Christians will say, “to us, it’s just entertainment.  We go with a certain amount of money, and when it’s gone, it’s gone” Yes, it’s gone…God’s money is gone, and you’re still responsible before God for who ends up with His money.

**Proverbs 6:27 (NIV84)** 27 Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?

You see when it comes to addictions and sin, you may not find a passage that says don’t do ………. But you will find many passages that tell you to live wise and not unwise.

If you play with fire, you will eventually get burned. Don’t Bet on IT, IT could cost you everything.