

Position Paper  
United Pentecostal Church International  
Weldon Spring, Missouri  
[www.upci.org](http://www.upci.org)

## **GAMBLING**

*Adopted by the General Board in 1994*

Inasmuch as gambling is one of the greatest blights of our society and is an encroachment upon every segment of life, it becomes necessary for the General Board of the United Pentecostal Church International to address the issue of gambling.

The following is a position paper from the highest board of our church addressing this moral fungus that eats at the very core and fabric of our society.

Gambling has been defined as “to bet on an uncertain outcome, to stake something on a contingency, playing the game of chance for stakes.”

There are those who do not feel the Bible clearly speaks out against this malady. Our consensus is that the Bible speaks to the gambling issue as it does to all the issues of life. The moral ideals of the Bible and the Bible’s insistence on obedience to the will of God are crucial for our examination and assessment of any issue involving human behavior, including the issues of gambling. Biblical faith with its emphasis on loyalty to God and its call to a life of trust tolerates no bowing of the knee to luck and no dependence on chance. Gambling appears to offer something for nothing when in reality it is nothing for something.

The first clear and direct reference to gambling occurs in Isaiah 65:11: “But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.” The prophet’s protest was against those Israelites who trusted in the false gods of chance rather than in the living God.

Matthew 27:35 states they cast lots, or threw dice, for our Lord’s garments. Could it be that one of the last things our Lord beheld during His cross experience was gamblers at Golgotha.

James 5:1-6 speaks of rich men who defraud the less fortunate for their personal gain.

Proverbs 23:4-5 is also a strong indictment. It reads, “Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.”

I Corinthians 6:8-10 teaches us contentment. Gambling, lottery, casinos create a spirit of covetousness which opposes the plain teaching of the Scriptures. Jesus further underscored this in Luke 12:15 when He warned, “Beware of covetousness.”

I Corinthians 10:21 declares you cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and eat at the devil’s table. Is a gambling table anything less than that of Satan?

Gambling violates the biblical principles of stewardship with regard to property, money, and its appropriate use. The Bible blesses the use of money or property which are in accord with the intention of God. Thus, money may be used to provide for our basic needs (II Thessalonians 3:10), support of one’s family (I Timothy 5:8), to contribute to the Lord’s work (I Corinthians 16:1-3), to meet human need (Ephesians 4:28, II Corinthians 9:6-15), to give to the poor (John 13:29), and to pay taxes (Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:7). Such conscientious handling of one’s resources precludes gambling. Giving to a game of chance with the blessings of God is not mentioned anywhere in the Holy Writ.

Gambling is greed and exploitation of others. It ignores the command to love our neighbor. We are enjoined to abstain from all appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22), to hate what is evil (Romans 12:9). The actions of the individual Christian are to be disciplined toward the moral and spiritual welfare of others (Romans 14:13-21). Our influence as Christians is to be exerted in a positive, aggressive, and godly fashion for the building of a Christian influence in the community.

Gambling contributes nothing to the common good. It undermines values, mocks work, finances crime, robs children, enslaves its addicts, subverts government, and poisons whatever it touches. Biblical insights lead us to reject the false promise of gambling and to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

There are those who state that the activity of gambling is no more than any other activity of life that involves risk. They will mention the purchasing of stock. They will mention the purchasing of property that may decline in value, insurance, or other investments. They say that since the outcome is unpredictable, loss can occur. This, they proclaim, is the same as gambling.

L. M. Starkey, Jr. made the following helpful observation: "Life does have its normal risk which one must accept with faith and courage. These normal risks are in no sense equivalent to the risk in a game of chance. Gambling devises artificial risks in the hope of excessive gain far beyond what the investment of time, money, or skill would justify. In gambling, the chance is unrelated to any creative effort called for by the farmer or stock broker in the responsible investment of mental, monetary, and physical funds."

It has been well-stated that gambling is recognized as any activity in which wealth changes hands, mainly on the basis of chance and with risk to the gambler. Creative effort, useful skills, and responsible investments are not integral factors.

The General Board of the United Pentecostal Church International, on behalf of our constituency, does firmly affirm its conviction that gambling is both un-biblical and morally wrong. Politicians may tell us that it is the way to raise revenue for the needs of education, roads, etc. If something is morally wrong it cannot possibly be politically right.

Gambling is wrong because it is addictive. Gambling is wrong because it is not consistent with the scriptural work ethic. Gambling is wrong because it ignores valid stewardship. Gambling is wrong because it involves monetary gain to the hurt and suffering of the less fortunate.

In the light of biblical revelation, we cannot sit idly by while this plague rips our nation apart. Neutrality is impossible. There are certain responsibilities to speak out. We cannot ignore them. We urge those who want to live in harmony with the Almighty and whose lives are dedicated to His pleasure to refrain from any form of gambling. We call upon our people everywhere to do all within their power to discourage the legalization of gambling.