

The Real Deal on Issue 3 (Gambling Amendment)

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On Tuesday, voters will decide Issue 3, which is a constitutional amendment to permit slot machines at seven horse racing tracks and at two Cleveland non-track locations. About the only thing attractive about this issue is its title, "Learn and Earn". An editorial in a local paper summed it up well with these words: "Actually, it is a scheme that would line the pockets of some real estate moguls and racetrack owners, giving them exclusive franchises to operate slot machine palaces."

Issue 3 promises funds for education, but the League of Women Voters guide notes that it "does not specify nor guarantee how much Ohio high school graduates will receive, or when scholarships will be paid after the first 12 years of scholarship funding." In addition, the guide notes that Issue 3 "would exempt all the gambling revenues from state and local taxation." In short, Issue 3, is a bad deal for Ohio.

For Christians, the greatest problem with Issue 3, and with gambling in general, ought to be that it is contradictory with the principles found in the Bible. Hebrews 13:5 says, *"Keep yourself free from the love of money and be content with what you have"*. If everyone who entered a casino obeyed this commandment, the gambling business would soon go broke.

I Timothy 6:9 warns that *"...people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction"*.

For some people, casinos and slot machines are a strong temptation to get rich in a foolish and harmful way. The reason it is foolish is the odds are against the player. It stands to reason that the house is not going to operate the casino for free. Eventually the odds catch up and most gamblers go home poorer than they came.

As to whether gambling causes ruin and destruction, one needs only interview the spouses (more likely ex-spouses) of habitual gamblers. When a home falls apart, the state or friends and relatives often have to help pick up the pieces. In the end, gambling may cost society more dollars than it will ever produce in tax revenues.

I Timothy 6:10 says, *"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil"*. Opponents of gambling establishments say that they attract criminal elements. Proponents say it won't happen here. God's word doesn't say if it will or it won't but it does warn that anything that is based upon loving money often attracts evil.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, St. Paul lays down the basic teaching that Christians should not expect money to just fall into their laps. He concludes, *"If a man will not work, he shall not eat"*.

If slot machines are approved, some persons stand to make a good living. But at whose expense? Often at the expense of those who already have the most trouble managing their financial affairs.

Jesus said, *"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe unto that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck..."* (Luke 17:1-2).

If gambling establishments tempt some people to sin, then God's Word condemns those who establish them. Voters included, even those who sit at home without bothering to vote.

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