

***WHAT'S
THE BIG DEAL
ABOUT***

GAMBLING?





Parents, have you ever considered the prevalence of gambling in our country? More specifically, that your youth may be targeted on a daily basis to participate in gambling? As of September 2025, four out of the top ten sports apps on the Apple App Store in the U.S. are gambling apps. Before we think, “My child could never be tempted,” consider the following statistic published in the Journal of Gambling Studies:

“A random telephone survey was conducted with a representative sample of 2,274 U.S. residents aged 14–21.... Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the respondents had gambled in the past year, and 11% had gambled more often than twice per week.”¹



The epidemic of online gambling has spread quickly since the legalization of sports betting in *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association* (2018). An article from UC San Diego Today notes: “Parallel with the growth in sportsbooks, internet searches for help with gambling addiction, such as ‘am I addicted to gambling,’ have cumulatively increased 23% nationally since *Murphy v. NCAA* through June 2024. This corresponds with approximately 6.5 to 7.3 million searches for gambling addiction help-seeking nationally.”² Gambling used to be something you had to seek out — now it can be found by simply browsing the App Store, watching a sports game and seeing an ad, or scrolling online where gambling ads are everywhere.



It's important to talk to your kids about this issue. Many children already know about sports betting, online casinos, and slot apps. Unfortunately, it is often the parents who are in the dark. Here are some biblical reasons that may help as you guide your children on this topic.

At its very core, gambling is covetousness — a lustful desire for wealth or someone else's possessions. The Powerball lottery in September 2025 reached nearly a \$1.8 billion jackpot, and everyone who participated had one hope: to take everyone else's money. Gambling, by design, depends on the sin of covetousness. Jesus warned in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of



the things which he possesseth.” This verse is a clear warning about covetousness, and a reminder that the value of one’s life is not dependent on how many things he possesses. Unfortunately, the person addicted to gambling believes the value of his life depends on how much money he wins or loses. It’s no surprise that the World Health Organization warned: “Gambling can lead to serious harms to health. These include financial stress, relationship breakdown, family violence, mental illness and suicide.”³ Let’s be reminded of what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:5: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”



Consider also that gambling is stealing. The Powerball jackpot odds were 1 in 292.2 million.⁴ You know what those odds should really be called? Stealing. If someone created a business promising great wealth to investors, but secretly knew that only one or two out of millions would profit while the rest would lose, we would call him a con man. But when it comes to gambling, it is somehow socially accepted. Scripture is clear: “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) Gambling is the opposite of labor, the opposite of honest work, and the opposite of giving to the poor.

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Gambling is wrong because it hurts the poor. Proverbs 22:16 declares: “He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.” That verse perfectly describes gambling. The University at Buffalo found that “problem gambling was twice as likely in neighborhoods with the highest levels of concentrated poverty compared to neighborhoods with the lowest poverty levels.”⁵ It’s no secret that the casino is the only guaranteed winner. The casinos get richer, and the poor get taken advantage of.



The Bible warns us in Proverbs 22:16 that oppressing the poor is very serious: “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.” Gambling oppresses the poor and enriches the wealthy — and, unfortunately, those who choose to participate in gambling only support that system.



Gambling is hastening to be rich. The ads that come on television, the billboards along the interstate, the apps on the App Store — all put out the same promise of riches: one spin of the wheel, one click, one lucky number, and you could be living the dream. The Bible warns us that hastening to be rich will lead to poverty, and that certainly applies to gambling. It's no secret that “the more you play, the more the math works against you, and the better the chances are of you walking out of the casino with less money in your wallet than when you came in.”⁶



Gambling is not just a harmless game. It is covetousness, it is stealing, it oppresses the poor, and it is hastening to be rich.

As with anything regarding money and possessions, the Apostle Paul wrote: “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10). Gambling feeds that destructive love of money, which leads only to sorrow.

Above all, gambling is a spiritual issue — one that distracts hearts from finding true contentment in Christ. The value of your life is not in what you own, but in Who owns you.



Endnotes

1. John W. Welte, Grace M. Barnes, William F. Wieczorek, Marie-Cecile O. Tidwell, and Joseph H. Hoffman, "The Prevalence of Problem Gambling among U.S. Adolescents and Young Adults: Results from a National Survey," *Journal of Gambling Studies* 24, no. 2 (June 2008): 119–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-007-9086-0>.
2. Mika Ono, "Study Reveals Surge in Gambling Addiction Following Legalization of Sports Betting," UC San Diego Today, February 17, 2025. Accessed September 3, 2025. <https://today.ucsd.edu/story/study-reveals-surge-in-gambling-addiction-following-legalization-of-sports-betting>.
3. World Health Organization, "Gambling," December 2, 2024. Accessed September 2, 2025. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/gambling>.
4. Multi-State Lottery Association, "Powerball Jackpot Increased to \$1.40 Billion Ahead of Tonight's Drawing," September 3, 2025. Accessed September 3, 2025. <https://www.powerball.com/powerball-jackpot-increased-to-1.40-billion-ahead-of-tonights-drawing>.
5. Cathy Wilde, "UB Researcher Finds Link between Problem Gambling and Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviors," University at Buffalo News Releases, January 3, 2014. Accessed September 3, 2025. <https://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2014/01/001.html>.
6. Christopher Neiger, "Casino Stats: Why Gamblers Rarely Win," Investopedia, September 23, 2024. Accessed September 8, 2025. <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0910/casino-stats-why-gamblers-rarely-win.aspx>.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Forge Youth Group is a ministry of Fellowship Baptist Church in Vienna, WV. Our desire is to help teens navigate Biblically through this ever changing world, and equip parents by warning them of current issues that their teen might be facing.

So, If you've ever wondered 'What's the big deal about this,' join us as we explore why some things are a huge deal to God, and why they should matter to us, too!

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