

Statement on Gambling and Lotteries

Gambling in its many different forms has been a problem to society for generations. It has been the ruin and destruction of many people who have willingly or otherwise fallen into its heartbreaking trap. Gambling includes such things as casino gambling, horse racing, high risk investments, state-sponsored lotteries, and church and civic group-sponsored raffles.

Sweepstakes may also constitute a form of gambling, and we would caution our members regarding any such involvement.

We believe that all forms of gambling are wrong and that Christians who are serious about their faith and practical holiness will want to avoid involvement in any way. Gambling promotes the myth that there is a shortcut to financial success apart from God-honored labor (Eph. 4:28). It promotes pleasure at another's expense and emphasizes getting rather than giving (Acts 20:32-35). Churches and charitable organizations sometimes use raffles and games of chance for fund-raising purposes. They may rationalize that the end justifies the means or follow situational ethics in these instances, but that does not make them right.

Scripture teaches us that if we value God's approval and believe in living consistently, we must fix our minds on that which is true and honorable, just and pure, lovely and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

Christ plainly warned against the snare of covetousness and taught that life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. We cannot serve God and money (Luke 12:15; 16:13).

Gambling often becomes an addiction and is a continual source of heartache, poverty, and suffering to those homes where one or more members are ensnared. The existence of groups such as Gamblers Anonymous, which attempt to help individuals overcome their addiction, confirms the seriousness of this problem.

We believe that the Scriptures teach us to abstain from all forms of greed. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Prov. 15:27. See also Prov. 28:20, 22).

We believe the state-sponsored lottery is not a Scriptural way to raise funds for even the most noble of causes. It promotes the illusion to the poor that they

may soon be the recipients of instant wealth and released from the hopeless cycle of poverty in which they find themselves. In reality, many of the poor waste some of their limited resources on the lottery.

We urge our members to live in simplicity with regard to material things. The Bible teaches that godliness with contentment is great gain, and that they who want to be rich fall into many temptations and have many sorrows (I Tim. 6:6-10). "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (I Tim. 6:11).

Officially adopted as a statement of position and policy on June 24, 1994 by the Southeastern Mennonite Conference

Lottery Resolution

In view of the fact that some scholarship funds are knowingly supported by gambling, which we believe to be unscriptural, our members should not receive money from such funds.

Adopted by South Atlantic Mennonite Conference on October 22, 2005