

Gambling is a willingness to risk something of value in the hope of getting something of greater value. Gambling can stimulate the brain's reward system much like drugs or alcohol, leading to addiction*.

Compulsive gamblers repeatedly turn to gambling as a preferred coping mechanism while disregarding its risks or consequences. For the addict, gambling is more of a mindset than a specific activity (poker, sports betting, etc.); he or she can turn any activity with risks and rewards into a vehicle for gambling.

Common Characteristics of Compulsive Gamblers

- **Isolation.** Knowing that friends and family won't approve of their choices and risks, gamblers increasingly isolate to continue their behaviors in secret.
- **Dishonesty.** Gamblers deceive others to hide their secret. They lie about use of money, whereabouts, and the extent to which they are gambling.
- **Absence.** Gamblers become willing to miss work, school, or family time in order to gamble. They often disappear at unexpected times.
- **Escape.** Gambling is used to cope with worry, trouble, boredom, loneliness, grief or loss.
- **Reckless.** Gamblers enjoy feelings of excitement and power that come with placing a bet. In that moment, nothing seems as important as the uncertain outcome of the placed wager. Over time, gamblers risk more to gain the "rush" once brought by smaller bets.
- **Debt.** Gamblers will take on debt, resort to theft, or ask others for "bail-out" money to cover other debts/financial commitments coming due. They chase losses with borrowed money.

Gambling Problem Assessment

If you wonder whether you have a gambling problem, honestly answer the following questions:

- 1) Have you gambled to escape problems, or to relieve feelings of guilt, anxiety or depression?
- 2) Have you ever tried to stop or cut back on gambling and not succeeded?
- 3) Do you return to gamble in order to "get even" from previous losses?
- 4) Do you conceal or lie about how often you gamble, the amount you wager, or your losses?
- 5) Have you ever had to increase the amount you wager to get the same "rush" when placing a bet?
- 6) Do you often think of future gambling opportunities or how you can find money to gamble more?
- 7) Has gambling caused relationship problems or work problems? Have you missed important events or work hours in order to gamble?
- 8) Have you asked friends for money, secured loans, or used credit cards to cover a desperate money situation due to gambling?

Note: If you answer yes to any of these questions, consider that you may have a gambling problem.

Biblical Insights

The Bible cautions us against the love of money and from schemes to get rich quick. Though gambling is not expressly condemned in the Bible, many of its motives are warned against.

- *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."* (1 Timothy 6:10)
- *"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"* (Hebrews 13:5)
- *"Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it."* (Proverbs 13:11)

We are stewards of what God has given us. The better question may not be whether you have a problem, but if gambling is glorifying God. Christians should honor the Lord in all things, including how we steward the money and time that He has given us here.

- *“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”* (1 Peter 4:10)
- *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”* (Matthew 6:24)

God loves you and has an adventure planned for your life. God doesn't want you to waste your days gambling. He wants you to be fully devoted to Him, so that He can take you on the best adventure. He wants you to take risks and live by faith for Him and nothing else. There is a greater mission for you.

- *“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* (Psalm 16:11)
- *“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”* (1 Timothy 6:12)

No one was created to be a loner. Come out of isolation. You can't walk the road of recovery alone.

Your recovery from gambling will depend on you yielding to God's Spirit, reading God's Word, and surrounding yourself with God's people.

- *“According to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being.”* (Ephesians 3:16)
- *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* (Romans 15:4)
- *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7)

Next Steps

- Take the **Gambling Problem Assessment** questions to consider whether you have a problem.
- Admit your problem. Until then, nothing will change (1 John 1:8).
- Acknowledge the problem to God and ask Him for help. He loves you and can free you from your addiction (1 John 1:9).
- Cut off access to gambling; whether that's people, websites or physical locations that tempt you.
- Get a *re:generation* Groundwork book and read the “Sober 24 Hours” lesson. Will you commit to 24-hour sobriety from gambling?
- Reach out to a friend and be courageous to be honest about your struggle. There is no shame in admitting a problem. Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a *re:generation* group, to address your gambling problem (James 5:16, Proverbs 28:13).
- Invite friends to see your finances to help be accountable with the money you currently have and to help plan how to get out of debt. (Proverbs 24:6)
- Do not give up when you mess up. Be patient with yourself. Recovery is not easy or linear. Celebrate growth and get back up when you slide back. (Proverbs 24:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Additional Resources:

- Go to www.regenerationrecovery.org for stories of hope: Jeff P, Matt D
- Read the *re:generation* blog, “How to Get Sober from An Addiction to... Porn, Drugs, Pills, Alcohol, Sex, Gambling, et al.”
- Watch Real Truth Real Quick, “Is it Ever OK for a Christian to Gamble?”
- Books: “Gambling: Betting Your Life Away” – June Hunt; “Gambling Addiction: The Problem, The Pain, and the Path to Recovery” – John M. Eades