

Gambling

By Jack Greenoe

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to 1 Timothy 6:10 in the section **It's in the Book**. After studying the comments on materialism, evaluate how you really feel about money. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Would I be willing to put money at high risk in order to get more money?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Luke 12:15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What is greed, and how can I guard my heart against it?

Assignment Three

Read Philippians 4:11. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Even if you have friends with much more fun stuff than you do, could you say that you are content with whatever you have?

Scripture to Memorize

"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." Philippians 4:11

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that gambling is not something that honors God because it is based on greed, materialism, and discontentment.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Obviously, losers outnumber winners in order to pay for the expensive casino buildings. In a way, gambling is legalized stealing. Now that the Internet makes gambling accessible to many more people than brick-and-mortar casinos, the dangers have multiplied.

Suppose one of your friends used his parents' credit card number, got involved in online gambling and ran up a large debt. What would you say to your friend about overcoming this problem?

Read 1 Timothy 6:10 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 10. For the love of money. Many times when this verse is quoted, people begin with the word **money**. The apostle Paul did not intend to say that earning and having money is sinful. His point was that someone who loves money in an unhealthy way will eventually fall into a trap of using immoral and sometimes illegal methods to get more. Paul warned the young preacher Timothy that the greedy desire to always get more money can lead to money becoming an idol. This can cause some people to slide away from growing in Christlikeness.

The people Paul had in mind had all their basic needs met, as well as most of their material desires. They had drifted into a realm where the pursuit of material goods was more important to them than a relationship with God. They were greedy and willing to take risks to gain more money.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now answer the question: After studying 1 Timothy 6:10, would I be willing to put money at high risk in order to get more?

Discussion Questions

Is it worth risking damage to your reputation to get more money, even if you have more than enough? Is it ever worth risking your family's financial future for an uncertain venture? Does playing games with the hope of making big money seem like responsible stewardship of what God has provided for you?

On Your Own

Since God speaks through His Word, find several Bible verses that describe how God is in control and provides for your needs. Write the references below.

Read Luke 12:15 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. Take care, and be on your guard. Jesus knew the potential devastation behind the trap of greed. *Beware* comes from a word that means “to perceive” or “to recognize.” “Be on your guard” is from a word used to refer to shepherds watching over their sheep. Sheep are extremely dependent on the protection of the shepherd because they are otherwise defenseless. **All covetousness.** When that thought is applied to greed, the meaning is clearer. Greed is a threat to anyone who drops his guard.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the questions: What is greed, and how can I guard my heart against it?

Discussion Question

What steps can followers of Jesus take to protect themselves against greed?

On Your Own

Imagine you take a pair of dice from a board game. You predict the number you’re going to roll. Using only one of the pair, you roll it. Imagine you recorded whether you correctly predicted the roll, repeating this 25 times. According to the law of probability, you will correctly predict the roll four times (one out of six). So the “odds” of predicting the roll are six to one.

Some golf professionals estimate that the odds of making a hole in one are 12,500 to one. The State of Texas reports that the odds of winning the largest prize in its lottery is 25,827,165 to one. Your dice roll and golf game have no risk involved. Placing hard-earned money at risk with these odds is simply not smart. Hitting the lottery is four million times harder than predicting the roll of dice. Pause and tell Jesus you want Him to be Lord of your finances.

Read Philippians 4:11 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 11. learned. Here, the word for “learned” is taken from the same root as the word *disciple*. The apostle Paul, who was one of the smartest men in the world during his era, was never too smart to quit learning. Paul understood that contentment had to be taught and learned. It was not natural, instinctive or obvious. **content.** This word referred to the fact that what had been provided for him, whether great or small, was sufficient. For Paul and for you, living within one’s means and being happy about it is one of the great secrets of being a disciple.

Paul completed this thought by writing in verse 13, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” This verse, often taken out of context to support some other issue, was intended by Paul to support being content with what he has. Such contentment is the opposite of the lure of gambling.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to this question: Even if you have friends with much more fun stuff than you do, could you say that you are content with whatever you have?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a prayer. Thank the majestic Son of God for what you have as well as what you don't have. Like the apostle Paul, ask Jesus to teach you the secret of being content.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

The Bible does not mention computers by name, so if we seek His guidance for whether to purchase a new laptop, we cannot build a case by what the Bible doesn't say. People who study logic refer to this as an "argument from silence," and it is considered an error. While the word *gambling* does not appear in the Bible, it is illogical to engage in gambling simply because the word cannot be located in Scripture. Heroine and online pornography are not mentioned in Scripture either, but God's perspective on those things is clear. Many factors develop the argument that gambling is sinful.

1. Gambling is addictive. An insatiable lust for entertainment and excitement lies behind the concept of gambling.
2. Gambling completely contradicts the biblical concept of a work ethic, since the driving motivation behind gambling is to eliminate work in the life of the gambler.
3. In a family where gambling has created financial trauma, lying negatively impacts the marriage.
4. Gambling is fed by covetousness, a sin clearly prohibited in the Ten Commandments.

Follow up Question

How does gambling feed the unbiblical desire of materialism?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.