



# The Country Preacher's Newsletter

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## How To Win At The Lottery

By Randall F. Matheny

There is a sure way for everyone to win at the lottery: Take the money you intend to spend on gambling, put it in a sock and stuff it under the mattress. Or better yet, put it in a good savings account, a good mutual fund, or an Educational IRA for your children.

Otherwise, the lottery is designed to produce the state a profit and the gambler a loss. In defense of playing the lottery one might seek justification in reasoning that "the end justifies the means." The rationalization goes something like this: "If I win, I'll give a portion to the church, to my kids, etc. And even if I lose, the money is going to a good cause, like the elderly, or education, isn't it?" The problem with this rationalization is that it is alien to the word of God, wherein we learn that only God's approved means produce a justifiable end.

Government sponsored lotteries are ingenious and unique in the sense that they suggest that profits will go to worthy causes such as education, making them the only form of gambling of which I am aware that attempts to strike a philanthropic chord in the hearts of

those they intend to entice and ensnare. The Bible affirms a work ethic. It was so from the beginning (Gen. 2:15) and is today (1 Thes. 4:11). The lottery is contrary to God's work ethic. The lottery entices participants with promises of big winnings which would certainly encourage the idolatry of covetousness (Col. 3:5) and would seem to be aimed

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directly at lovers of money. The Bible teaches that the love of money is the root of all evil and is directly responsible for deep sorrow and erring from the faith from which the faithful are to flee (1 Tim. 6:10-11). The justification that concerns us comes by faith (Rom. 5:1; 14:23), and faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Thus, we should ask if the lottery, or any other form of gambling, is compatible with a life that is being led by the word of God.

The Bible teaches responsible stewardship toward God (1 Cor. 16:2; Mal. 3:8), our families (1 Tim. 5:8), the needy (Jas. 1:27), and to government (Mat. 22:21). The odds of winning in lotteries are fixed so that the sponsor of the lottery profits. In the case of a government sponsored lottery, this amounts to a voluntary tax,

collecting above and beyond what is legally required of the taxpayer. This may seem inoffensive, but who's being robbed so that the lottery may be played? Is it God? Is it the family? Is it the needy? One may be sure that organized gambling hopes the gambler does not think of these things, and if he does, that he does not think on them too long.

Finally, consider that thousands of gamblers must lose so that a few may win. Since organized

gambling counts on most gamblers not to track wins and losses, it is not surprising that many people who think they have won money have in reality lost. Many gamblers are unaware of this because they gamble what they consider to be "pocket money" and do not miss it until the groceries begin to run low, a child needs a new pair of shoes, or there is not enough money to pay bills. The astronomical odds against winning guarantee, for the vast majority of gamblers, a net loss of money over time. A loaf of bread for the hungry is treasure laid up in heaven. A lottery ticket is a guaranteed loss here and in eternity. Christ commended a poor widow for what she did with just two "mites" (Mk. 12:42-44). How much money we have doesn't matter, but what we do with what

we have does. Why hazard your soul over "...the gold that perishes" (1 Pet. 1:7)?

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### "What Hast Thou Giv'n For Me?"

Randall F. Matheny

"I gave My life for thee, My precious blood I shed, that thou might'st ransomed be, and quickened from the dead; I gave, I gave My life for thee, what hast thou giv'n for Me?" That haunting first verse from the song by Frances R. Havergal ought to give every Christian pause to think about how his attitude toward Christ is reflected by his activity or his apathy. It is a reflection of true love for the Lord when we hold nothing back in His service, while it is a mere shade of love grown cold when we do nothing, or as little as we deem necessary to "get by." The Lord who bought us (1 Cor. 6:20) and to whom we owe our all deserves more than what he gets from us even at our very best: *"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do"* (Lk. 17:10).

The "Parable of the Talents" (Mat. 25:14-30) is another case in point. To one servant was given five talents, to another was given two talents, and to the last was given one talent (talents refer to a sum of money, but represent varied abilities to serve). It is noteworthy that the Lord did not require the same return of service from the three, but required a

return comparable only to what had been given "...to each according to his own ability." It is also noteworthy that there is no mention of anyone who had been given no talent, and from whom was expected no return in service. The "one talent man" would have been given the same blessing as the two faithful ones, who were equally rewarded, had he only employed his ability in the Lord's service. The measure, then, is not between men in terms of merit or production (2 Cor. 10:12), but between what is expected of each individual based upon his God-given abilities (whether they are great or small) and what he does with those abilities. Matthew Henry, in commenting on the parable, says, "We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. It is not meant that the improving of natural powers can entitle a man to Divine grace. It is the real Christian's liberty and privilege to be employed as his Redeemer's servant, in promoting his glory, and the good of his people: the love of Christ constrains him to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again. Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that He requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help. **Whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord.**" Well said. Let each of us who love the Lord give as we

have been given, and rejoice to hear, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."*

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