

How To Win At The Lottery

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 education, isn't it?" The problem with this rationalization is that it is alien to the word of God, wherein we learn that God's approved means produce the only justifiable end. 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 lead by the word of God.

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. This would certainly encourage the idolatry of covetousness (Col. 3:5) and would seem to be aimed 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 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, for the vast majority, is a guaranteed loss here and in eternity. Christ has shown satisfaction for just two "widows" 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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