

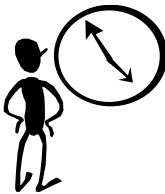
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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Time of Assembly



Sunday:	
Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)	
Bible Study	4:00 p.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday:	
Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

#NOTMYCAESAR

By David Diestelkamp

Jesus lived primarily during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius who ended his reign cloaked in paranoia, violence, and rumors of depravity and corruption. It was probably Tiberius's face on the denarius Jesus requested to be shown in response to being questioned about paying taxes to Caesar. "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" Jesus asked. They said, "Caesar's." "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," Jesus said to them (Matt. 22:17-21). Pay taxes to a corrupt government whose governors and soldiers would eventually participate in the murder of the Lord Himself? Yes.

The first Christians lived under the carnage of the cruel and bizarre reign of Caligula. When his reign was cut short by his murder, Claudius was little better. Aquila and Priscilla got to experience firsthand the emperor's ire when Claudius tried to solve his problems by expelling all Jews from the city of Rome (Ac. 18:2). Comply with a megalomaniac emperor's unreasonable edicts? Yes.

Then it was Nero's turn to plot and murder his way to the throne in Rome. He is infamous for being vicious and cruel and for his harsh taxation. Nero's atrocities are legendary. Two thousand years later, the name Nero lives in infamy among Christians for his persecutions. Here is what the apostles wrote at the very time that this man (described by some historians as a "brutal psychopath") was reigning:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. [1 Tim. 2:1-2]

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the

authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. [Rom. 13:1-7]

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. [1 Pet. 2:13-17]

Let me say again: these instructions were written during the monstrous despotic rule of Emperor Nero, the man who ascended the throne by murdering family and possible heirs to the throne; the man who kicked his pregnant wife to death; the man who openly married a man he had castrated; the man who persecuted Christians and blamed them for burning Rome. Pray for him? Yes. Be subject to him? Yes. Honor him? Yes. Pay your taxes? Yes. #NOTMYCAESAR was not an option that Scripture gave to Christians.

Politics have caused a vast divide in our country. Some Christians want to think that a president being elected by a suspicious or even illegal method means they need not recognize or honor him. Some conclude that a president who is immoral, accepts the killing of babies (abortion), or condones the sexually deviant is not "their president." And some are judging the validity of a presidency based on their perspective on law, rights, taxes, foreign policy, or free trade. We must remember: the first century Roman emperors failed in all these areas; yet Christians were told to pray for them, submit to them, honor them, pay taxes to them.

It is legitimate to ask, "How do we honor the dishonorable?" Obviously, we are not being asked to call evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20). Without enumerating ways to honor in every imaginable case, I want to challenge each of us to examine what is in our hearts: what we say and what we post and share on social media. Is it expressing prayerful submission and honor to our governing officials, even when (and especially when) we strongly disagree with them? If you can't think of anything positive about the elected official, that should be your challenge to let Christ live in you and prayerfully honor them. It's hard, but "...this is the will of God..." (1 Pet. 2:15). We are not simply choosing a president; we are choosing whether we will do God's will or not.

The Distracted Life

Worried and Troubled by Many Things

By Al Diestelkamp

On one occasion when Jesus was the guest of honor in her home, Martha was doing what most godly women would do. She was serving. Her sister, Mary, was not helping her, but instead was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him teach. Finally, Martha had enough and appealed to Jesus to intervene: “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me” (Lk. 10:40).

I don’t know about you, but on the surface that sounds like a reasonable request. Martha was being hospitable while her sister was lounging on the floor. So we may be somewhat surprised at Jesus’ defense of Mary and His mild rebuke directed at Martha.

Once we get over our surprise, we note that the text reveals, “Martha was distracted with much serving.” So Jesus lovingly says, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things” (Lk. 10:41). He goes on to say that Mary made a better choice. We are not informed as to just how Martha reacted, or whether this caused her to take her apron off and join her sister at Jesus’ feet.

What is significant to me was the statement about Martha being “distracted.” The KJV uses the word “cumbered,” which is defined as “being over-occupied about a thing” (*Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p.261). Clearly, in this situation she was not distracted by evil. She was being distracted (over-occupied) with something that was good.

Being over-occupied with something that is *good* can cause one to neglect something that is *better*. One of the problems of many of the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus dealt with was that they were over-occupied with Sabbath-keeping. I think we can safely say that Jesus kept the Sabbath perfectly, but not to the satisfaction of some. On one occasion Jesus answered the Pharisees who had accused His disciples of doing that “what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:2) by reminding them that under unusual circumstances David and those with him entered the house of God and ate the showbread which under normal circumstances was only to be eaten by priests (vv.3-4).

Later, these detractors asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (Matt. 12:10), and Jesus answered by asking who among them would not help a sheep that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, and then declared “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (v.12). These Pharisees were so over-occupied with Sabbath-keeping that they didn’t realize that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:28).

In another confrontation with some scribes and Pharisees who were so over-occupied with paying tithes—even to the point of tithing their mint, anise and cummin—that they neglected weightier matters such as justice, mercy and faith, Jesus declares “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matt. 23:23). Tithing the contents of their spice cabinets was *good*, but not to the extent that it would distract

them from attending to weightier things.

We have to be careful lest we become so over-occupied with good things that we neglect the better things.

Let's face it! In addition to all the evil that begs for our attention, there is an ever-increasing number of causes and activities which also compete for our active participation. The result is that many of us have cluttered our lives with so many "good" activities and interests that we don't have time for the weightier matters that will help us not only in this life, but all the way into eternity.

It is good to work in order to provide financially for our own (see 1 Tim. 5:8), but it is not good to become so over-occupied with working that we become work-aholics and neglect the weightier matters, such as spending time and providing spiritual leadership for our families. Speaking of spending time together as a family, this too can become a distraction from what is even more important. For instance, it's good to be able to plan family activities and go on vacations, but we cannot allow ourselves to be so over-occupied with travel and fun that we neglect the more important spiritual responsibilities, including worshiping with other Christians. If this happens we are not only hurting ourselves, but are neglecting our responsibilities toward our brethren.

It is good to make sure our children get a good education so that they can succeed in life, but we must not be distracted by much education to the point where we, like Martha, are "worried and troubled about many things." Even if a child, were to get the very best secular education, if he is distracted from his spiritual training he will likely be a failure in what is most important.

It's also good if we're able to help our children develop culturally, civically or athletically, but not to the point where it distracts them—or us—from what is most important. It's quite interesting to me that a team coach, or a band director, can insist on participants attending daily practice sessions or rehearsals for weeks on end, and we consider that acceptable even when it hinders the more important spiritual participation.

Clearly, we have more than enough trouble avoiding being distracted by sin, let alone by things that are good.

Should a Christian Gamble?

By R. J. Evans

In 1931, the state of Nevada legalized most forms of gambling. The city of Las Vegas, in particular, became the center of gambling in the U.S. Over the course of time, it has been referred to as "Sin City", which is not surprising. Now, the city has developed a marketing catchphrase— "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas". Need I say more?

Since 1931, many forms of gambling have become a thriving "vice" in America, especially casinos. At present, Nevada and Louisiana are the only states where casino-style gambling is legal statewide. In other states, casino-style gambling is restricted to cer-

tain small geographic areas like Atlantic City, NJ, the Mississippi gulf coast, or the American Indian reservations.

I have never been to a casino (and have no desire to go), but I have seen enough TV commercials to get an idea of what they are like. I find it interesting what they use to lure people in—bright lights, glitter, entertainment, prizes, and especially the food. The buffet-style food is a big draw.

The commercials displaying colorful scenes of appealing foods give evidence that they know they can get to people's wallets through their stomachs. In these establishments, it is as if the average person is playing against a "stacked deck". The "odds" are always in the casino's favor.

Games of chance are like that — if that were not so, casinos would lose so much money they would have to go out of business. The gambling patrons win just enough to whet their appetite to keep coming back — it is always "wait till the next time — I'm going to hit it big!" The sad part is that a good percentage of these folks are already having financial difficulties.

At this point, we raise the question of our title: Should a Christian gamble? To gamble is "to play games of chance for money or some other stake; to bet on an uncertain outcome." Some people reason that since the word gamble is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, then it must be okay. Of course, there are other terms not specifically mentioned in Scripture but are still in violation of what the Bible teaches. Words such as "rape", "abortion," or "suicide" would come under the category of what is considered wrong, based upon Bible teachings and principles.

In this article, let us observe some biblical principles that are violated when someone gambles, what it can lead to, and why it is a sinful vice. Consider the following:

1. Gambling destroys the incentive to work (Genesis 2:15; 3:19; Ephesians 4:20; II Thessalonians 3:10; Acts 20:34-35).
2. Gambling is unjust gain (Proverbs 28:6-8; Ezekiel 22:12-13).
3. Gambling is a form of covetousness (Ephesians 5:3; Jeremiah 22:13; Habakkuk 2:6).
4. A gambler is greedy and becomes a lover of money (I Timothy 6:5-10; Colossians 3:5).
5. Gambling breaks the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:10).
6. Gambling violates the "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12).
7. A gambler robs his family (Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 5:8).
8. A gambler destroys his influence for good (Matthew 5:13-16).
9. Gambling is a form of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22).
10. Gambling is addictive (I Corinthians 6:12-13).

Based upon the biblical teachings mentioned above, Christians need to stand firmly against all forms of gambling.