

ABCs of gambling.

Addiction and Alcohol. The more accessible and acceptable gambling becomes, the more likely gambling addiction will increase. The presence of a gambling facility within 50 miles roughly doubles the prevalence of problem and pathological gamblers. Alcohol and gambling are inseparable. Free liquor is the mainstay of the gambling industry. Liquor loosens people's inhibitions and keeps them in a fantasy world.

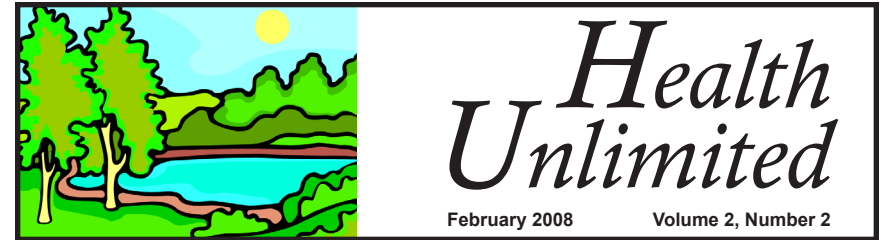
Bankruptcy. According to one study, gambling behavior may cause up to 14.2% of annual bankruptcy filings in the United States. One of every 66 households filed for bankruptcy in Nevada, the highest in the nation. The gaming industry hypes up the taxes paid to the state and the jobs brought to the community. But for every \$1 that goes to the community and state \$3 must be paid out for damages done by the gambling addict.

Casinos and Crime. Casinos increase all kinds of crime (except murder). There is usually a lag of three or four years after its opening. Once a person becomes addicted they must find money to feed their habit. Las Vegas has one of America's highest crime rates. Forty percent of the felons jailed in Nevada are from out of state. A gambler will steal from their job, their family, their neighbors their church, and their friends.

Adventists have a role to play in holding the line against the encroachment of gambling in our society. Our first priority is to win people to Jesus. But the environment in which we live, preach our message, and rear our children is also our responsibility. Let's shout it loud: "Gambling is bad government, bad business, and, worst of all, bad morals."

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Gambling: America's Newest Addiction

Adam didn't consider himself a gambler. He and a group of students would get together when the jackpot got large and pool their few dollars to buy a ticket. He visualized all the things he could do if he won \$350 million. "Wow, he thought to himself, if I won I could buy Mom and Dad a big house, pay off my credit card debts, finish my education and still give the church a double tithe!"

One day a pop-up ad about poker surfaced on his computer. It looked like fun, so he figured, why not? He signed up with his debit card, played a little poker, and won \$400! What a rush! The next day after class he couldn't wait to get back online.

He lost the \$400 he won, and then some. And since he didn't have a whole lot of money to begin with, he figured he had to win it back. He skipped classes to gamble more, and the more he gambled, the more he lost.

He was flat broke now. So he panicked and did something he was not proud of. He called his parents and lied to them. He told them he needed money for food and books. They sent it, and he gambled that away, too. A few months later, he got evicted from his apartment off campus and had to go back home. His parents were pretty curious about how he lost all the money



they had been sending, so eventually he had to tell them the truth.

Adam had to leave school to work full-time for the rest of the year to pay them back, and now goes to Gamblers Anonymous meetings. The hardest part, he confesses, was lying to his parents. "I feel so ashamed about that."

Adam is very much like the typical gambler. They start for fun and with visions of easy money. They win a little and they're hooked.



The three predominant reasons people start gambling are (a) the excitement it brings, (b) enjoyment, and (c) to win money. Many seniors say they started gambling to relieve boredom and feelings of depression. Seniors often have lots of time after retirement and are more vulnerable because of age-related cognitive decline, and recent losses of friends and

profession. Many seniors worked hard taking care of their families and educating their children. They did all the right things, only to find themselves, after retirement, involved in an activity they can't control.

Gambling can include buying instant lottery tickets, playing the on-line or video lottery and poker games, putting money on cards, dice, or dominoes, playing in casinos, betting on sporting events, betting on the horses or greyhounds, and many other activities.

Slot machines are the cocaine of gambling. Slots now make up almost 80 percent of some casino gambling profits. Each slot machine has three wheels with 20 symbols, which gives about 8,000 different combinations. Women are attracted to slot machines because if they make the wrong call at the roulette wheel or the blackjack table, they often must endure the ridicule of men. At slot machines they can do their own thing without fear of embarrassment.

While it's true that different slot machines pay out differently,

they're all programmed so that a player comes out behind in the long run. Some machines give lots of small payouts to keep the player feeding in the coins, while others rarely pay out except for extremely large (and rare) jackpots. The odds of hitting those big jackpots are often tens of millions to one. Remember, EVERY slot machine is designed to do one thing: keep your money. And, in order for you to win, another must lose!

Under US federal law, gambling is legal in the United States, and states are free to regulate or prohibit the practice. Gambling has been legal in Nevada since 1931, forming the backbone of the state's economy, and the city of Las Vegas is perhaps the best known gambling destination in the world. In 1976, gambling was legalized in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and in 1990, it was legalized in Tunica, Mississippi; both of those cities have developed extensive casino and resort areas since then. Since a favorable US Supreme Court decision in 1987, many Native American tribes have built their own casinos on tribal lands as a way to provide revenue for the tribe. Because the tribes are considered sovereign nations, they are often exempt from state laws banning gambling, and are instead regulated under federal law.

Gambling, often referred to as "gaming", had 2005 gross revenues of \$84.65 billion, and thrives in the United States. Gambling feeds on human weakness, contributes to the debasement of the character of the population, and destroys community self-respect. In spite of what the states say they are raising money for--and it's usually for education--school support rarely increases after lotteries are sanctioned, because state support is then withdrawn.

Since there are no direct biblical commands forbidding gambling, the Christian community has been lulled to sleep by the steady introduction of legalized gambling into mainstream American life. Christians must remember the

