

# Sharing The Light

*Pool through the eyes of Christian players*

*This month we begin with our question and answer(s) program.*

## **Question #1, July 2021:**

***Is it okay for a Christian to gamble at pool?***

### **Mike Massey:**

All you have to do is ask Jesus, and he will let you know.

Check your heart out and see what the motives are. Is it greed, coveting something someone else has? Is it your ego wanting recognition from others to show them you're a better player (vain glory)? Do you want to match up and get the upper edge and take advantage of someone? Is it because you think it will make you a better player by playing under pressure for money? Is the game boring to you if nothing is on the line?

All of these motives are of the flesh which brings death to your spirit instead of joy.

If it's another Christian brother or sister you want to gamble with, and you need the money, just ask them for it, and if they have it to gamble with, they should give it to you. That's what we are suppose to do when we're in need.

If it's not a Christian, and you want to witness to him about Jesus, I don't think he'll want to listen to you after you take his money.

In the past I've gone against the spirit and gambled, and had no peace. I've also participated in Calcutta's, which I believe are wrong. It's been a long time since I've gambled one on one, and I'm going to quit participating in Calcutta's.

You've got to realize everything I'm saying is foolishness to the world. But if you're a Christian, you are no longer of the world and have to hate your life in the world to gain it. The world cannot know God. Satan is the God of the world.

If you go to your pastor, he will tell you the same thing I'm saying, and should be able to show you scriptures.

### **Robin Dodson:**

For me, God has made it crystal clear I would bring him more Glory if I did not. It was one of my first opportunities to give Him a real grateful shot out. This is my story.

Story #16 - The Gypsy Boys

One afternoon, I took my young son to a nearby playground. I had also taken my Bible to read while he played. As I lay on a blanket watching Robert and the other kids play, I thought, "This is a great day!" I felt an overwhelming love for all the kids and started to put down my Bible to go play with them. As I started to get up, I felt a strong stirring inside and knew I was supposed to read. There would be plenty of time to play later.

The Bible was very new to me. I had read it before but never really understood what it said until that day. As I read, two verses popped out so powerfully that I got a pen and underlined them. This was the first time I felt God using the Bible to talk to me; and the first time I ever underlined anything in it.

I had just started helping a friend by working at the House of Billiards in Los Angeles (It was more like he was helping me). Fresh off drugs, the work was keeping my mind and idle hands busy.

Although I had not been playing pool every day, I was still a strong player and found myself really enjoying the game again. As I was shooting pool before my shift started, this guy walked up to my table. I knew he was one of the Gypsy boys who hung around the pool room. My pool savvy and years of being around hustlers told me this guy was a total sucker.

He asked, "Hey, you want to shoot for some money?" I had been watching him shoot a couple tables down from mine and I knew I would ROB him! But instead of saying, YES! I told him that I did not gamble! Mentally, I was still in a gambling mind set so, trust me, when I heard myself say those three words, it was weird! It was like hearing the Fonz say, "I'm sorry." It was a pool player's dream comes true - I could have busted the room! I thought to myself, "What an awful time to quit gambling!"

He continued to watch me hit balls and, probably realizing he would have been in way over his head if he had played me, he came up with a new idea. "Hey, Robin, how about you play, and I'll do the gambling? I will stake you. Everyone in here has money and we'll make a huge score!" I told him I knew I could beat him and his friends, but I could not play for money - his or mine. I explained that I had just become a Christian and not gambling was just one way I could thank God for saving my life. I added I loved Jesus more than his money.

My shift had started, and I was behind the counter. Three of the Gypsies came up, ordered drinks, and started chatting with me. They asked me questions about my being a Christian - not questions of interest but more of doubt. I was able to answer the first guy's question because I had just read about it that afternoon. It was the first verse I had underlined in my Bible. The second guy also had a question and, once again, I had the answer. Yes, it was the second verse I had underlined, and then came the clincher. The third Gypsy said, "Well, I don't know about all that, but I know one thing. God can't get a heroin addict off heroin!" Blown away by what he had said, I pulled up my sleeve, revealing tracks still fresh on my arm, and said, "Yes, He can!"

Those Gypsy boys probably thought I was a Bible scholar. Little did they know that I had just shared everything I knew from the Bible - two verses! I was not sure about them, but for me, it was a WOW - and I never forgot it.

**Steve Lillis:**

# God and Gambling for the Pool Player

by Steve Lillis

Many pool players of good conscience ask if it is alright to gamble on pool and if they are a person of faith, they would want to please God as well. There are many diverse opinions and equally as many reasons to gamble or not. In our culture today it is not given too much of a second thought as it is legal. There are lottery tickets, casino gambling, and even a bet on playing a game of pool with someone is for the most part legal because pool playing is considered a game of skill and not luck. If you are a God-fearing person and look to the Bible for advice you will be surprised in some cases as to what the Bible teaches.

The Bible does have what appears chance or luck in it. For example, in the Old Testament of the Bible in Leviticus 16:8 and Numbers 26:55 people would cast lots to determine an outcome. In the New Testament in Acts 1:15-26, the Apostles cast lots to see who would replace Judas as an apostle. However, the Bible also says in Proverbs 16:33 (NIV) "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD" and in the NLT that same verse says "We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall." **Lot-casting** in the **Bible** was not **gambling** and does not satisfy the four criteria necessary for a gamble to take place (action taken, risk of loss, short-term, zero-sum game).

First of all, let's look at what we are talking about when we think of gambling on a game of pool. Someone walks into the pool room and asks you if you gamble and challenges you to a game. What do you do? On one hand you feel like a bet on a game as long as it is reasonable and both parties can afford to lose the bet then why not! Let's look further.

Suppose your opponent has a problem with gambling as many pool players. You might want to make a decision that is in the best interest of both of you. Think of it this way using alcohol as an example which just like gambling is addictive. You are with a friend that has a drinking problem and he is on the proverbial wagon trying to get dried out. You go out to dinner and the waiter asks if you would like a drink with your meal. You usually have a glass of wine with dinner and with no problem so now what do you do in consideration of your friend? The Bible teaches us in I Corinthians 8:9 "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak." So here we see that the better thing to do might be to consider the other person first and abstain from that drink. In the pool hall a similar thing could happen with a fellow pool player and gambling.

Now you might say I know this person and there will not be a problem with a little sociable side bet. Consider who might be watching and what they might think or do! I once played a race to 5 in 9-Ball with a fellow professional pool player in a local pool room for just bragging rights as it was only practice. We did not even wager on who would pay the table time. Some onlookers were curious as to who would win this duel and asked me how much we were playing for. My response was that we were playing for love, the love of the game. These onlookers or railbirds as they are called in pool world were not satisfied with my answer. However, most of them knew me as a pool playing Chaplain and knew that I did not gamble but also knew that I would still play to win. There was a lot of talk on the side while we were battling it out on the green felt. When the match was over and I won 5-2, one of the railbirds came up to me and said thanks. I said for what and he said I just won \$200 betting on you as I will bet on anything!

I am still not satisfied with these answers as I need more information you might say. Okay then let's look directly at the Bible and gambling. Proverbs 13:11 says "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." There is no substitute for the good old fashion idea of work for it! You might hear someone say in the pool room something like what a sucker bet as I trapped that person or he got his nose open and I robbed him on the pool table. In most pool circles this is a badge of honor! In the Bible it says in Ephesians 4:28 "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."

One also might say, now you are getting personal Steve! Yes, I am and glad that was brought up. As a professional pool player and an official Chaplain of the Billiard Congress of America having been appointed in 2007, I consider others first and the example I set to be of utmost importance as a Gospel Trick Shot RACK Team member. RACK stands for Recreational Ambassadors for Christ's Kingdom. As I represent Jesus and his Kingdom, I want to be above reproach and set a good and Godly example. I do not gamble, drink, flirt, swear, or the like. I am not bragging as I am now free from those very same things that I once did! Jesus has delivered me not only from the **penalty** of my sins by what he did on the cross, but He also delivered me from the **power** of sin so that I do not harm myself or others anymore. Someday because I trust in Jesus, I will be free from the very **presence** of sin and there will be no pain or sorrow as I will be with Jesus for all of eternity.

How about you? Will you accept what Jesus did for you on that cruel cross 2,000 years ago in paying the penalty for your sins? Then after you do believe that he will give you the power of the Holy Spirit as promised to resist sin after you put your trust in Him! Finally, to top it all off, after believing you will have the great hope of someday spending all of eternity in His glorious presence! Trust Him today!

## Tom "Dr. Cue" Rossman:

This is a fantastic question and has been a point of controversy among players for years. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, when used as a noun as in an "act of gambling", it is defined as an enterprise that is untaken or attempted with a risk of loss and a chance of profit or success.

Any "risk taking" becomes a "HUGE RISK" when "God's money" \* is used without prayer and a confirming peace about "taking such risks"! When "self" gets in the way of the divine direction of the Holy Spirit, we often miss the special joy and righteous blessing the Lord He has prepared for us and wants to give us.

\* According to Psalms 24:1 (ESV) – "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"

There is no verse in the Bible that says: "Thou shall not GAMBLE"!! However, we are instructed in Proverbs 16:9 (KJV) as follows: "A man's heart devises his way; but the Lord directs his steps". As we focus on Jesus and what He did for us ALL on the Cross, the Holy Spirit will then (and only then) have latitude to work in our lives. Through our "spiritual senses" the Lord will help us to plan the way He wants to us to plan, and will lead us in the way He wants us to be led.

The pitfalls of gambling (broken relationships, jealousy, greed, and so much more) are held at bay by the love of Jesus when it is Him working through us with the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV)

By simple logic, gambling can easily be perceived as a non-righteous entity because of the negative images and destructive-laden traits of this vice...and by assimilation...something contrary for a Holy Spirit led Christian to engage in. In addition, a major issue of a Christian gambling is that it can “cause another brother or sister” or “anyone else for that fact” to stumble or to be led astray in their life’s journey. Below is a Biblical reference to this very important principle:

Roman 14:13-19 (ESV)

**13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.** 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. **17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.** **18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.** **19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.**

Note: Verses 17- 19 above are the key to “doing the right thing” and exhibit a Holy Spirit focus and selfless walk, as we “share the light” of Jesus to and among others.

Other items to consider in the overall gambling issue are as follows:

- Acts 20:35 (NIV) – “It is more blessed to give than to receive” – gambling is almost always focused on the “receiving” aspect...often in some “staged / impure motive” manner – to be honest with oneself, no one really enjoys the “giving” aspect of gambling – they would much rather “receive”!!
- 1 Timothy 6:10 (KJV) – “For the love of money is the root of all evil” – normally gambling is based on the “love of money” ...often with a coveted / deceptive attachment from using a “set up of odds or favor” on the front end of any negotiated engagement / match up
- II Corinthians 9:7 (NIV) – “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” – I can’t remember ever seeing a “cheerful giver” after watching a gambling match – reluctance to pay the “risk loss” can easily accompany “risky situations”!

Personal commentary points:

- I realize that Christians have a free will choice to gamble or not. However, just because Scripture doesn't explicitly call something is a sin or tell us not to do something, it doesn't mean you shouldn't prayerfully consider it. Ask and seek the Lord's opinion of it for your own life – He will guide you!
- Since September of 1972, whenever I have been confronted by someone that wants to “gamble”, any feelings, desires, and / or compulsions within me to do so have been quelled. In other words, **God has not confirmed in my Spirit to “go ahead” and use “His money” in this manner. I do not foresee getting His permission / confirmation any time soon to do otherwise.**

- My main focus / reason for playing our (God's) beautiful "sport gift" of billiards (in any form) was deeply etched in my mind and "purposed in my heart" back in 1959. Elsie, my first employer, at Elsie's Pool Room in Minonk, IL taught me the sights ("colors of the rainbow" – solids and stripes as Roy G. Biv) and sounds ("birds chirping" – when balls click against each other). This led to a main foundational and Biblical principle to "Play Skillfully with a Shout of Joy" (Psalms 33:30 NKJV). The "receiving" (in so many special ways) has been beyond abundant, and the beauty of the game has been a masterpiece to behold. Thank you, Jesus!!

A copyrighted article written in 1999 by Focus on the Family entitled A Biblical Look at Gambling highlights several soul-searching points with specific Biblical reference verses. For anyone (Christian pool player or otherwise) interested in a broader perspective of this subject, please visit the following link:

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/a-biblical-look-at-gambling/>

I found the following point of this article to be heart-piercing and worthy of focused consideration by anyone struggling with a perceived notion that is OK to "use God's money" to gamble with "on or off" the table.

**Gambling undermines a believer's trust in God. The Bible teaches that Christians are to look to Him as their sole provider and to be content with the material blessings they receive from His hand. Involvement in gambling indicates both lack of trust and dissatisfaction with the Lord's provision. See, for instance, Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:11-12, 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5.**

Submitted by: Tom "Dr. Cue" Rossman

7/1/21

## **Nick Mannino:**

Some Christians think it's ok, but I think about how guilty I felt, especially when playing for a lot of money, when I won and watched my opponent looking down and sometimes angry. I know the feeling all too well. I think of what effect it would have on a Christian's witness? I played a tournament in Ohio. Warming up prior to the event a player asked me if I wanted to play nine ball for a couple dollars a rack. I asked him if he considered that gambling and he said no, so I accommodated him. Even though I won, no one got hurt. I still didn't like the way it made me feel. My conscience tells me not to gamble. Thank you! Nick

## **Tommy Kennedy:**

Hello everyone here on AZBilliards and across the Globe! First off I would like to thank Roger Long and Mike Howerton for giving me this opportunity and for allowing me to come out on this public forum and address this very important issue. This will be the beginning of several bible based answers to some very important and key questions that weigh very heavily on the hearts of many people, Christian and non-Christian alike. So hopefully this will help open up the hearts and minds of some people who are serious doubters and who are truly seeking for answers. This will also (I am sure) lead to much criticism and mockery of some of the answers given here. The intent of this whole series of questions and answers is to Glorify The Lord Jesus Christ and to give the hearers some bible based answers to these important and critical questions. It is also a way to point people to the only Lord and savior Jesus Christ who lived a

sinless life and died a sacrificial death on the cross and then rose from the grave on the third day for our salvation! Jesus Christ is God! The only God and savior of mankind! He is the only God and He died in our place as the substitute for the sins of the ones who would believe in Him, and He suffered the death we should suffer. The old testament puts it this way, "It pleased God The Father to CRUSH The Son." Jesus was crushed (Put to Death) by His Father for us!!! And He was Pleased to do it! So I just wanted to preface my answer to this question with some of the Gospel Message.

So here is the question and my answer as it stated in The Word of God. I feel this is not my opinion but what God has said in His Word. So here we go.

Question: Is it okay for a Christian to Gamble at Pool? Answer: No!!! Absolutely not!!! The question should be Is it okay for a Christian to Gamble. But since we are billiards based here at AZ Billiards I want to answer it from that perspective. I am totally convinced biblically, there is no way a true Christian can justify Gambling at pool. It is totally inconsistent with being a Christian, plain and simple. Now there will be some so-called christians who come along and say, "I am a christian, and I gamble." I have had that situation come up before. It's really an attack on me most of the time.(Really an attack on Christ because it attacks the Bible) They are saying "I know you quit gambling because you are a Christian, but I gamble,(And I'm a christian) so it doesn't matter if you gamble as a christian because I am doing it so that makes it okay." The standard they are using is their own standard. It's their own morality and not God's. So right there is the fatal flaw to begin with. Just because someone claims to be a Christian and really believes they are a Christian, that should validate gambling to be okay for a Christian. These so-called Christians in their minds really believe it's okay to gamble and they have justified it in their own mind. The bible says, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." Also, "Every man does what is right in his own eyes." You had better look deeply into your own heart and make absolutely sure you are a true Christian as defined in the Bible. Judge your salvation by the standards of Christ and not by your own standards. Don't go by what you are thinking a Christian is by using your own standards. I am not trying to discourage anyone about their salvation If It Is Real. But I would call anyone who claims they belong to Christ to see if they are real! Paul even said, "Examine yourself to see if you are in the faith." Emphasis added! Also please read Matthew 7:21-23 where it says, "On that Day Many will say to Me Lord, Lord, And I will say to them, I never knew you, depart from Me you workers of iniquity." Also the other argument is, "Well everything in life is a Gamble." That is a very common argument and it could have some merit. BUT when you bring that argument up to the light of scripture it holds no water!!! In reality Nothing is a Gamble! Everything is in The hands of God Almighty! He determines every outcome! He determines what happens to you and life is not a gamble in that sense. He is sovereign over all things and over all people. Nothing happens by chance and nothing escapes His notice. He knows all things before they happen and He has ordained all things to be for His Glory. He has TOTAL CONTROL of the elements and He holds you in His hands! But let's look at it from the human side. There is a difference between Gambling and taking a risk. Gambling is just that, Gambling. It is leaving whatever it is up to chance. It is something that you have no control over. It's like rolling the dice and hoping for a 7. It's like hoping for your number to come out on the roulette wheel. It's like hoping for Black Jack so you can beat the dealer. It's like flipping a coin for all you have in your pocket and hoping heads comes up when you call heads. This is definitely Gambling. It's just silliness. It is childish and foolish. It takes no intelligence and intellect to do these things. You just let it go and hope for the best. Let me give you an example. I was in Vegas years ago when I was very young and not a Christian. I was with John Ditoro. We were at the dice table. I bet 100 dollars on the pass line and lost. I did it again and lost. The whole time I felt like I should bet the don't pass line but I didn't. I bet the pass line 12 times (1200 lost so far) in a row and on the 13th. time I bet the don't pass. Now I am not superstitious, but I do believe in God and Satan. This is right before I quit Gambling and gave my life to Christ! Well you can guess what happened. It passes, and I lose again. Don't you think I was in the grasp of Satan and God was telling me something. And by the way, they

don't call double 1's Snake Eyes for nothing LOL. So that is Gambling in the truest sense. But the other side is taking a risk. There are many things in life that have a risk attached to them. You get in your car and drive down the street. That is taking a risk. You eat at a restaurant. That is taking a risk. You get on an airplane and hope you don't crash. That is taking a risk. You go to a doctor and hope he gives you the right diagnosis. That is taking a risk. So many things require risk taking. These things are more to do with intelligent decision making. It is just part of life and God knows this. He has built into all things the element of risk. It is really a test of our faith in Him. We need to trust Him with all of our decisions. We need to have faith in our risks. A risk is logical and ordinary. We need not fear risk and we need to replace our fear of risk with trust in Him to protect us.

So here are some reasons I know it is wrong for a Christian to Gamble at pool. 1. It takes the emphasis off of trusting Christ to provide and puts our trust in ourselves to provide. It makes us the ruler of our own lives. It says God is not my provider but I am. I am a self made man. I can do it all on my own. It exalts ego and pride. It's really from the Devil and from his way of thinking. It's self-reliant and has no faith at all in the true God. It's telling God, "I don't need you, I am the determiner of my destiny and I will provide for myself." It slaps God in the face! Let me just add at this point a very good scripture to point this out. It's in Matthew 4. This is when Satan tempts Christ after 40 days of fasting. Satan comes to Christ and says, "IF You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." Jesus replied, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes out of the mouth of God." This is the temptation Satan used. Satan said If, which already is trying to cast doubt in the mind of Christ. If you are the Son of God you can do this miracle and turn the stones into bread. You're hungry and you need some satisfaction. God has forsaken You and you need to take action, (On Your Own!!!) NOW!!!! He was telling Christ to provide for Himself and don't wait on God's provision!!! Take the will of God into Your own hands. Don't trust God's providence, but trust in your own power and ability!!! This is the way Satan comes to us every time. He tempts us to be self reliant. He wants us to do it on our own. Gambling is geared to that end. It makes us satisfied with our accomplishments and our achievements. Trust me i know because i did it for years. I know the attitude it has. I know the larceny I had in my heart and the greed that goes along with it. Trust me I've been there. So the point of the temptation of Christ was for Christ to distrust His Father and to rely on Himself. Christ told Satan, "God will feed Me when he is ready. He will give me first place when HE is ready!!!

2. It is breaking the commandment of God that says "Love your neighbor as yourself." If I Gamble, I am trying to win, at all costs. I do not care about you, I only care about me. It creates an attitude of selfishness and pride and ego. Again this is a Satanic attitude. It all comes from below the Bible says. Gambling does not exalt God and Humility. Gambling says I want to win and I am the only one that matters! It is also harmful to your neighbor. It hurts them and makes them feel inferior to you. I remember when I used to lose at pool years ago how empty I felt. I was always so sad. I felt so alone and lost. This is what Gambling promotes. It is not healthy and helpful. It only does damage to others.

3. It is illegal. Gambling as you know is illegal in most places. It is frowned upon by many people. It is against the law of the land and a Christian has no business breaking the law.

4. Just as a follow up to the last reason. It will ruin your testimony. I would have absolutely No Testimony to the world if I gambled. I could never really tell anyone with any authenticity that Jesus loves them and He can change your life if I was a Gambler. How can He change your life if He can't change mine??? We are to be His witnesses and we are to be an example to others. Jesus said, "Let your light shine so that men may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven." We are to let the Light of Christ shine and we are His Ambassadors to reach the world. How can we do that if we are no different than the world? We are Light and we are Not Darkness anymore!!! We have been delivered from the kingdom of Satan and we have been translated into the Kingdom of His (God) dear Son!!! We are not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather we are to reprove them. So as a Christian we are to not gamble and we need to be separate from the world.



5. Another reason I believe we are not to Gamble is because it is bad stewardship. We are to take care of all that God has entrusted to us. The Bible says, "A steward is to be found Faithful." We need to rule our house well and take care of all He has given us in this life. If we just take His Money and His resources and just throw it away at the wind, we are being bad stewards. We will be held accountable for the way we handle money. How you handle God's money is a very strong indicator of your spiritual condition. You know the saying, "Little is much when God is in it." This is very true. It's better to have little with righteousness than to have much with unrighteousness. I would rather die poor and end up in heaven, instead of rich and end up in Hell. I'm not saying God doesn't want us to have money and nice things. But I am saying it's the love of money that condemns us. It's our attitude towards money that is the key. You can have very little and love it and have very much and hate it. It's all perspective. Jesus said to beware of the love of money.

6. One other reason I think it is wrong is because of the time it consumes. If you waste hours on end in the pool room and endeavor to be rich, you are wasting the time God has given you and you are throwing it away. The Bible says, "Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time for the days are evil." Why would we want to dishonor God by wasting much of our time in the pool room trying to make more money? The time He has given us is His time and it is allocated to us to use it wisely. God will judge us for a misuse of His time. I know it takes practice to be a champion, but I feel we should think it through and count the cost. I would rather live for Him and use my time to reach others for Christ than to waste lots of time in the pool room. We need to play but we should spend our time wisely. It's really a judgment call on our part as God leads us differently. We need to pray and ask God for His wisdom in this matter.

7. One more thing. It was kind of already mentioned in the other answers. The Bible says, "Let him who stole, steal no more, But let him work with his hands that which is good so he can help the one who has a need." I no longer steal as a Christian. Now if I make money in a tournament or do an exhibition or a lesson, I can have resources to be able to help those in need. I no longer steal from people but I can be a giver instead of a taker. Now I don't make enemies, but I make friends. I hope the only enemies I have are from opposition to the Gospel and not by what I do in my life. I want to live a life that glorifies Christ and exalts His Name.

8. Lastly. I just want to point this out. And thank you for your patience with me on this matter. I know it's a long letter, but it is very important that we address these matters and issues from God's perspective. Some are going to come along and say, "You are playing in tournaments. Isn't That gambling?????" Well the best answer to that is this. It is definitely a different approach. There is definitely a difference in tournament play and a Gambling match. People say How so? I feel biblically it is like a competition. A tournament is upfront and honest. Yes people do pay an entry fee. They do have to try to win to make money. They do have to travel to get there. Yes, all those things are true. Mostly everything we do is based on competition. Life itself is competitive. Capitalism is based on earning a living more than the next guy. People are always trying to make better products. Everyone is trying to better themselves. Biblically this is even true. The Apostle Paul said, "We all run in a race and only one of us is going to win the prize." He even said, "Strive for the mastery." He was saying, if you run, Run To Win. Don't settle for second place. Even Paul affirmed competition and the need to win. Even Jesus in a parable said, "The last will be first and the first will be last." Also if a man sets out to build a temple doesn't he count the cost of how much it will cost. We operate on competition. Even when we get to heaven we will have a full reward or not a full reward. So look at it this way in a tournament. Just say there wasn't an entry fee, but you have to get there to play. it would still cost you expenses to put out of pocket. So it is costing you either way. So that is my closing argument, Lol One more little story that happened one day. I was having a disagreement with someone at a tournament who wasn't a Christian and this issue came up. The guy was saying, "Oh, a tournament is just like Gambling." A friend of mine defended me and said, "No it isn't! And he was emphatic!!! There is a difference between a tournament

and Gambling! This friend of mine was not a Christian either and yet he understood the difference between the two.

I hope this helps clear up some issues. Love Tommy