Gambling: The Seductive Fantasy, Part 2
Selected Scriptures
90-165

Well as you know, last time we started a study on the subject of gambling...this seductive and destructive dream. And I was unable to finish it, so we want to do that this morning.

At the close of the service I had some interesting reaction last Sunday morning. One friend came to me and said, "Well, I just want you to know that that was utterly irrelevant to me." And I said, "Well good." I mean, I'd like to preach on a lot of sins that are utterly irrelevant to folks. But...in fact, he said, "I did enjoy the music though."

He was followed immediately by another person who came to me and said, "That sermon was relevant to me. It was only a couple of months ago that I buried my brother who committed suicide over a gambling debt."

And I think those two anecdotes illustrate the issue at hand. I could preach a sermon as I have in the past on homosexuality that would have some relevance to people, it would have great relevance to other people and perhaps no relevance to some. But sins have their way of finding people and there are people who in our own congregation have been touched and are being touched deeply by this issue.

As we learned last time, gambling is a serious evil in our land. It effects the vast majority of the people in our nation. Up to 95 percent of Americans have gambled and it has devastating effects.

We closed our discussion last time by understanding that the success of gambling is based on certain sins. If those sins didn't exist, gambling wouldn't either. The sins that support gambling are materialism, greed, discontent, exploitation, laziness, distrust of God's provision, disdain for the virtues of labor, irresponsible stewardship and indifference to those in need.

Now those are not the only sins connected to gambling, those are just the sins that feed it. You will also find that where there is an escalating preoccupation with gambling, there is usually an escalating involvement with every other kind of sin. Those are the sins that attend the explosion and gambling, but there are many others that go along with it, as we pointed out last time. And nothing frankly is more indicative of the corruption of our government than legalizing gambling. And nothing is more characteristic of organized crime than illegal gambling. And the combination of both provides a legitimacy and an availability to a sin that is very, very destructive of moral character and even of the fabric of a nation. Our declining moral character, our dissolution as a nation is manifest through this epidemic of gambling.

And as I noted last time, the church hasn't made a big issue out of it, but it ought to. The church has

to be faithful to address this disturbing sin. The early church certainly did. I want to give you some excerpts from a sermon. This sermon was preached in Latin originally in North Africa, probably around Alexandria when Rome was the power in North Africa. It was preached in the second century. It has stayed in existence until now, been translated into English and gives us a great insight in to how the second century church viewed gambling.

The sermon begins like this...we don't know who the preacher was...:

"Christians: great and abundant is the Lord's mercy." Then he says this, "Satan's temptations are numerous, but the principle ones among them are idolatry, fornication, theft, extortion, greed, fraud, drunkenness, impatience, adultery, murder, jealousy, false witness, lying, envying, wrath, slander, heresy and a thousand other crimes like them. And of this number is gambling." Pretty contemporary list, wouldn't you say?

"The game of dice is an obvious snare of the devil," the preacher said. "He precedes over the game in person, bringing to it the deadly venom of the serpent and even inducing ruin which when it is seen to be nothing, a great let down is brought about in the players. I ask you, O Christians, why is the former the case? This hand has been purified from its sins which were committed prior to conversion and the same hand has been admitted to the Lord's table, having received by God's mercy that which concerns the salvation of the soul. The same hand that rolls the dice is lifted up to the Lord in prayer. What shall we say when the very hand with which we make the sign of the cross on our forehead and with which we consume the Lord's table is involved again in the devil's noose from which it formerly had been delivered? I speak of this hand which is always given over to gambling, causing its own ruin and damnation. This hand is accustomed to the unbridled passion of gambling because gambling is like the devil's hunting sphere and those who play the dice are wounded with an irresistible allurement.

"It is at the gambling table," the preacher said, "I tell you, it is at the gambling table where the devil slyly watches for the moment when he shall surprise the players and immediately rejoice in his triumph over his victim. I tell you, it is at the gambling table where one loses his possessions and enormous sums of money. The loss leads him into court battles and insane passions of theft. O noxious gamblers, you are pernicious and filled with indolent iniquity. O cruel hands which turn their own arms against themselves, ruining with disgraceful zeal the estate which their ancestors have amassed by the sweat of their brow. O savaged hands that run to the dice, guilty and indefatigable, applying themselves day and night without leave. You damn yourselves by your sin, yet after you have committed it you do not stop."

The preacher says, "The gambling board is the devil's snare and the enemy's trap which indices greed but in actuality brings utter ruin. By gambling men become poor, squandering their own riches. Stop being a dice player and start being a Christian before Christ beneath the gaze of the angels and in the presence of the martyrs, cast your money upon the altar of the Lord, distribute your money to the poor before you allow it to be squandered by your unruly passions and trust your stakes to Christ who is always victorious. Divert all your fortune and surplus for the necessities of the church. Deposit your gold and silver and your riches in heavenly treasure. Snatch your hands back from the game and turn your heart away from its allurement. Keep the darkness of the enemy out of sight and keep your hands pure from the sacrifices of the devil. Break away from these unruly customs and pursue being a self-controlled Christian. Apply yourself to wisdom and teach yourself in the counsels of the gospel. Lift pure hands to Christ, no longer look upon the dice. Amen."

Pretty strong sermon, huh? St. Augustine said, "The devil invented gambling." John Calvin outlawed gambling in the entire city of Geneva. Martin Luther said, "Money won by gambling is not won without self-seeking and sin."

Now we talked last time something about the issue of gambling, but I want to speak today with regard to the biblical principles that we must bring to bear upon it. To understand the immorality and sinfulness of gambling completely, we need to grasp some biblical principles.

Before I give you those principles, first of all, I want to speak to an issue that always comes up when gambling is discussed and that's the issue of casting lots. Some people want to justify gambling as a modern counterpart to casting lots and they say that casting lots was done biblically and therefore the Bible affirms the role of gambling.

Well I want to answer that and it's worthy of careful thought because we have to understand it. It is true that lots were made of a sheep's knuckle bones and functioned very much like dice, ancient dice and modern dice. In the ancient world sometimes these bones were used in gambling and they were different shapes and sizes and the roll of those bones yielded a certain result with a certain meaning. In the ancient world those bones were not only used in gambling but sometimes they were used in non-gambling games, like children use dice in games they play today. But the association with gambling was fixed in ancient times. And so we do understand that people can assume that casting lots would be some form of gambling, and since God used it therefore gambling is all right.

But any study of gambling and the Bible must then deal with the issue of how we are to understand this matter of lots. Is casting lots an example of biblical gambling and did God condone by that the use of lots for us to gamble?

Let's look at that in Scripture for just a moment. The Israelites did use the casting of lots to determine the divine will. It was used, for example, in the Old Testament to make decisions, according to Exodus 28 and Leviticus 8. Lots were cast in the Old Testament to identify the man Jonah who caused the storm in Jonah chapter 1. Remember they were trying to decide who was to blame for the storm and they cast lots and it pointed toward Jonah. Lots were used to select Saul as king in 1 Samuel chapter 10. Lots were used in the Bible to choose soldiers for battle in Judges 9, to divide the land. And you see that repeatedly in the book of Numbers and a couple of times in Joshua. Lots were used to select animals for sacrifice in Leviticus 16:7 to 10.

In the New Testament lots were cast to select Mathias to replace Judas and that is recorded in Acts 1:21 to 26. And the only other place in the New Testament where lots were used is at the foot of the cross where the soldiers used lots to gamble, as it were, to roll the dice who would get which part of Christ's clothing.

Lots were also used to determine who had committed a sin in 1 Samuel 14. They were used to identify the holder of loot in Joshua chapter 7 remember when Achan had stolen the loot and buried it in his tent. Lots were used to distribute the sons of Aaron into the priesthood and also to determine the priestly rotation in office according to 1 Chronicles 24. And lots were also used to determine who had the privilege of living in Jerusalem according to Nehemiah chapter 11.

So, we're simply affirming the fact that lots were used to determine certain things. At no time, mark this down, in the using of those lots was anyone ever putting something to risk. The use of those lots was not costing anyone anything so it was not a gambling use of lots. Furthermore, Proverbs 16:33 is the key verse that defines all of this. Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord." The lot is cast into the lap, they would put it into the garment and shake it around in the garment, but every decision is from the Lord. Lots were simply a way by which a sovereign God providentially revealed His will. Very much like the way He used the urim and thummim which was on the breastplate of the high priest in some fashion to reveal His will, God used lots in order to show people His will. When a decision needed to be made and there was difficulty in understanding the mind of God about it, God intervened providentially to control how those lots fell in such a fashion as to reveal His will. It was the sovereignty of God that determined the lay of the lot.

Cotton Mather(??), again that American Puritan, said, quote: "Lots being mentioned in the sacred oracles of Scripture are used only in weighty cases and as an acknowledgement of God sitting in judgment and cannot be made the tools and parts of our common sports without at least such as appearance of evil as is forbidden in the Word of God," end quote. There is no fate, there's no chance, there's no luck in using biblical lots, it was simply a means that God used to reveal His will. And after Pentecost the casting of lots was never again used as a means of determining God's will. There God had sent the Holy Spirit. He has given us His written Word as a source of His moral will. The practice of casting lots is no longer needed.

One thing, however, is very clear. Casting lots was not gambling, nor can the practice of gambling be justified in any way from the biblical use of lots. The soldiers, for example, who were casting lots for Christ's robe at the foot of the cross were not gambling because none of them had paid to play. No soldier was taking any risk, nor was he getting an advantage at someone else's loss who was in the game. No one was going to win at another's expense. They were simply trying to determine who got the robe. This example of casting lots would be similarly to what we call today drawing straws. And even though the word "lottery" comes from the word "lot," casting lots and contemporary lotteries are qualitatively different activities. The former is based on the working of God's sovereign purpose through His providence, and the latter on an imagined luck.

Now, let me give you the principles. Principles why gambling is wrong...one, it denies the reality of God as sovereign by affirming the existence of luck or chance...it denies the reality of God as sovereign by affirming the existence of luck or chance. Luck is an anti-God idea. By the way, there's no such thing as luck. The only real Luck I ever saw was a Chinese family that I knew in Los Angeles. That's true. Luck is non-existent. Luck is an anti-God idea. Scripture clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is the sovereign of the universe and that as the sovereign of the universe He both miraculously, that's by suspending natural law, and providentially, that's by operating through natural law, controls every detail of the outworking of the events of this universe to achieve His own purpose. He is sovereign, He is in control of everything. Nothing happens by chance. There is no such thing as chance. There is no such thing as luck. They are non-existent. They are the fabric of human imagination who wants to deny there is a God who is sovereign.

In Psalm 103:19 it says, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His sovereignty rules over all." You can see that in Psalm 47 verse 4 it is even God who determines how much of an inheritance every person gets. In Deuteronomy it is God who gives you the power to get wealth. In Daniel chapter 4 verses 17 and 25 it is God who lifts up rulers and puts them down. It is God who is the sovereign of the universe.

But most notably I would draw your attention to Isaiah chapter 65 verses 11 and 12, these are worth writing down. Isaiah chapter 65 verses 11 and 12 help us to understand how God views this matter of gambling. It says in verses 11 and 12, "But as for you who forsake the Lord, who forget My holy mountain, who set a table for fortune and who fill cups with mixed wine for destiny, I will destine you for the sword and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter." Let's stop at that point.

This is a most interesting portion of Scripture. God says for you who spread a table for fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for destiny, I will destine you for the sword and you will all bend down, or bow down for the slaughter. You'll bend over to be decapitated by Me. Why? Because you spread a table for fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for destiny. Spreading a table means bringing food to an idol. Filling bowls of mixed wine means bringing wine to an idol. And the two gods that the people of Israel were worshiping, one was the god Fortune and the other was the god Destiny. If you want another name for destiny it's luck or chance. God says because you are bowing to luck and chance, I'll decapitate you. Fortune comes from the Hebrew word gad and it means luck. Destiny comes from the Hebrew word Meni and it means bad luck. Gad usually means good luck, Meni means bad luck...m-e-n-i in the English alliteration. So they were worshiping the god of good luck and the god of bad luck and they were bringing offerings to the god of bad luck and offerings to the god of good luck. Gad combined as Baal-gad means "lord of luck." And they were worshiping Baal-gad, the lord of luck, as a part of their ancient worship of Baal, Joshua 11:17, Joshua 12:7, Joshua 13:5. In Numbers 13:10 gad, Gadiel literally, Gadiel means god of my luck, or my luck god. And they were worshiping the god of good luck and the god of bad luck, faith in luck and faith in God are mutually exclusive ideas. In Isaiah 65:12 that I just read you, pronounces judgment on those who worship the false gods of luck.

To believe in luck is to believe that God doesn't exist or that God's not sovereign. If God does exist and He does, and since He is all powerful, all knowing, He is the creator and the sustainer of the universe, He is the one who upholds everything by His own power and brings to pass His own will, there is no such thing as luck. It is non-existent and chance is non-existent. Things don't just happen randomly by chance. Chance is nothing. It's non-existent.

They tell us, these very educated scientists, that the whole universe came into existence by chance. That is a level of idiocy that is beyond description because that is to say that the whole universe came into chance from absolutely nothing because chance is nothing. But if you believe that everything in this universe came into existence from nothing, and that it all just happened because of luck, or chance, if you'll buy those odds then go to Las Vegas because gambling is a certainly clear corollary to that view of the universe. But if you know that God created the universe, every molecule of it, every atom of it, every component of every atom of it and that He created it all precisely the way He wanted it, sustains it the way He wants to sustain it and directs it to the ends for which He has made plans, if you understand that there is no such thing as luck or chance, then why would you gamble? Chance stands in direct opposition to a purposeful creation. It stands in direct opposition to a creation ordered and directed by the sovereign God of the universe. Chance is the personification of anarchy. It's the personification of nihilism. God is in control of everything. Chance is non-existent. Luck is non-existent.

When people say to me off the cuff, "Good luck," I'm prone to sermonize. Don't say "good luck," that's nothing. You might as well say "nothing." Chance is only another word for human ignorance. Gambling is a kind of a secularized divination based on non-existent chance. It's superstitious

witchcraft. We're talking about some pitcher for the Dodgers who has been wearing the same undershirt the whole season, it's his lucky undershirt. And they...I think it was Vin Scully was saying, "Not so lucky if you have the locker next to his."

Life is not a gamble. There is no such thing as luck. There's no such thing as chance. Rabbits can keep their feet. God is in control of the non-Christian's life, God is in control of the Christian's life and God is in control of life itself. Depending on luck and chance is a philosophy which deifies nothing. It's a form of idolatry and Israel was doing it. They were worshiping the god of good luck and the god of bad luck, unbelievable.

Our God is a sovereign God and He reigns in heaven above and on earth below. And worship of idols is detestable to Him. And believing in luck and chance is idolatry. Whatever you have is not by chance. Whatever you have is from God. Whatever you don't have, God didn't give you. Whatever you do have, He gave you. If He's withheld from you, it's according to His purpose. If He's given to you, that's according to His purpose also. And in the end it works into His plan.

Second point, gambling is not good stewardship of what God has given us. In fact, it's not stewardship at all. Gambling is not good stewardship of what God has given us, in fact it's not good...it's not even stewardship at all. The Bible teaches us, and here's the bottom line on this point, "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it," Psalm 24:1, everything is God's. Everything is God's. Everything in the whole universe belongs to Him. It doesn't belong to us, it belongs to Him. And it all is to be used for His glory. "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Everything is to be for His glory.

Psalm 50, listen to verses 10 to 12, "Every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you for the world is Mine and all it contains." Everything is His. He owns it all. It's all His. And we have it put into our trust to be used to bring Him honor.

The illustration of this that is most notable is found in Matthew chapter 25, and I want to have you turn to it for a moment. We don't have a lot of time this morning because we want to have time for the Lord's table and we will, but this passage needs to be addressed because it teaches such a good point. Matthew 25, Jesus in verse 14 gives a parable of some stewards who were given some property to manage by the estate owner, the homeowner, land owner. And he was going away and he wanted to see how they would manage what they were given. And when he came back, you remember the story, he gave to the first one five talents, now those would be a measurement, a talent was a measurement of silver usually. So he gave him five talents. Gave another one two, verse 15. And another one--one. And he went away to see what these guys did with the stewardship.

And immediately verse 16 says the one who received the five talents went out and traded. Went out and went to work. He went out and did some business, buying and selling and whatever, investing, whatever he did and doubled his money. And the next guy took the two, did the same thing. The one who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. He didn't do anything, he just buried it in the hole and just kind of hung around.

Well the man came back and, of course, he rewarded the ones who had demonstrated such good

stewardship. In verse 24 the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed." And I think he exaggerates the case here, how tough this guy is, expecting something out of nothing. "And I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the ground, see you have what is your's. I didn't lose it. I didn't lose it, it's here, I buried it real deep in a secret place so nobody could get it, here."

You say, "Well, you know, it's...hey, I mean, he could have lost it. Maybe this is okay. Maybe this is passable." Well verse 26, "His master answered and said to him, You wicked, lazy slave." And there is the point. Why didn't he multiply the amount? Because of what? Laziness. Every...every opportunity was provided for him with a little bit of effort to multiply that and it was not enough for the master that he hadn't lost it, that didn't gain him any ground at all. He said, "The least you could have done was taken a walk to the bank and put it in there and I would have had some interest." So verse 28, "Take away the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents."

And then verse 30, "Cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness in that place where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He sent him to hell.

You say, "Well, boy, I mean, he didn't lose what he had." No, but the point was he should have made something of it. God is not content that we just keep what we have, He wants us to use it for His honor and His glory. I'll tell you something, if that servant was sent to hell just for keeping what he had and not multiplying it, what's going to happen to the person who wasted what he had?

When God gives you a stewardship of resources in life, He expects you to use them for His glory. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Moreover, 1 Corinthians 4:2 is required of stewards that a man be found...what?...faithful. You certainly can't gamble, you can't bring your offering and bow before the god of destiny or the god of fortune or the gods of luck and expect that to be a stewardship to God's glory. Everybody who gambles loses their money. The few who win a little usually lose that later on. The worst stewardship of God's gift possible is to throw it away at some god called luck, that's idolatry and bad stewardship.

Third principle, gambling displaces and demeans the God-given place of work...gambling displaces and demeans the God-given place of work. God has designed work as a blessing, you understand that? The old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's plaything" is true. God didn't just give us work because it was...it was good for Him, He gave us work because it was good for us because fallen people need to be preoccupied with something other than temptation. Genesis 3:19 God laid it out, "By the sweat of your brow you'll eat your food." You're going to have to go to work, it's for your benefit, the battle for bread. Proverbs 12:11 says, "He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment."

Now t here's not a better example of chasing fantasies than gambling which causes people to disdain work and throw away their money like fools. Now you can even do it by phone on the Internet, throw away money you don't have and get so badly in debt that you may never be able to extract yourself.

Proverbs 13:22, it says, "A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren." Instead of wasting your money chasing the god of chance, you ought to be setting it aside so that as a good man you

have something to leave to your children and your grandchildren.

Work is a command from God. It's a gift from God. It's a good gift. Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let the one who stole steal no more but let him work with his hands, providing for himself and those around him." Colossians 3, as we saw last Sunday night in our discussion of work, talks about how we're to work as if we were working for the Lord Himself. Second Thessalonians says if you don't work, you shouldn't eat. First Timothy 5:8 says if a man doesn't work and provide for his household, he's worse than an infidel, an unbeliever.

Irresponsibility in the realm of work is an abdication of what it is to be human, to say nothing of abdicating and disobeying the duty that God has given to us. God's world is a place of order and purpose, it's not a place of undefined chaos being run by the gods of luck. And God has designed for us to work and that we should be blessed by that work. He's designed for us to use our reasoning capability and be blessed through the application of that reasoning ability. By those means He would meet our needs and we would enjoy the goodness of life.

Fourthly, gambling is driven by the sin of covetousness...gambling is driven by the sin of covetousness. Gambling violates directly the tenth command which is not to covet, Exodus 20:17, Deuteronomy 5:21. Gambling exists because the sin of greed feeds covetousness. It betrays discontent with God's provision. Luke 12:15, Jesus said, "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Did any of you see that thing on happiness the other night on 20-20? John Stossel's report where he interviewed all the people who won the lottery who were so miserable...they were miserable, their marriages had broken up, their families were a mess, and all their friends hated them because they wouldn't give them any of their money. And John Stossel was giving the report on happiness and somebody said to him, "Are you happy?" And he said, "No." A man's life doesn't consist in the abundance of things he possesses. I mean, we're warned about that repeatedly over and over and over again. Whatever you have is what God has provided for you. And whatever you don't have is what He hasn't provided for you.

But gambling makes a persistent appeal to covetousness and is fundamentally opposed to the unselfishness which was taught by Jesus Christ and by the New Testament. The attempt inseparable from gambling to make a profit out of the inevitable loss and suffering of others is certainly the antithesis of loving your neighbor as yourself. If we're ever going to curb gambling, we're going to have to curb covetousness...pretty formidable task. Greed, materialism, love of money, they flourish in a gambling environment. Gambling built on covetousness is an act of unfaithfulness to God because it assumes that God has not given us what we ought to have. He hasn't given us enough and it assumes that more is a good thing. Is it?

Listen to Proverbs 30 verse 7, "Two things I asked of thee, do not refuse me before I die." I only want two things in life, he says. "One, keep deception and lies far from me...keep deception and lies far from me." I want the truth. I want truth. That's a noble request. Much like Solomon seeking wisdom. Here's the second one, "Give me neither poverty nor...what?...riches. Feed me with the food that is my portion. You know what I can handle, You know what You want me to have, give me that. If You give me too much, I'll be full and deny You and say...Who is the Lord? I don't need Him. Or if I have too little I'll steal and profane the name of my God." I know myself and if I have too much

I'll be proud and boastful and I don't need God. And if I have too little, I'll be...I'll be tempted to steal and I'll become a thief.

God knows you and He knows me and He knows what we need and He knows what we can handle and He knows what tests He wants to bring into our life and He's defined the stewardship and the character of that stewardship for each of us. I don't want yours, and I hope you don't want mine.

Fifth, gambling seeks gain from the loss of others. Gambling is a violation of the eighth commandment because gambling in the end steals. You might as well break into the house and take what they have. It steals from the losers. It is fundamentally a violation of the command to love your neighbor. It takes money from others. It strips families of resources. It increases debt. It leads to poverty. It leads to suicide. Twenty percent of addictive gamblers have attempted suicide and the suicide rate of the spouses of compulsive gamblers is 150 times the national average. Gambling is pursuing prosperity at another's expense, exploiting the poor and the undisciplined. Teaches greed, covetousness, and attacks the ethics of hard work, saving, self-denial, capital accumulation, exalt Hedonism, and on demand gratification.

So gambling is seductive. It lures people in. And Paul says some things are permissible but not beneficial. Some things are permissible but I won't be brought under the power of any. Gambling is so seductive. Forty percent of white collar crime in America is caused by compulsive gamblers. Gambling is a choice, it's a bad one...it's a bad one. It destroys individuals. It destroys marriages. It destroys families. It destroys society.

Well, for anyone to support it, including United States Government, is a travesty on moral and social responsibility. The government might as well sell drugs. Gambling is the result of post-modern pessimism. The hopelessness of practical atheism that says there's no God, no hope, no future, no reason, no rationality, just luck...that's...that's something we can thank evolution for. There's no God. It's all just luck. And so the senselessness of gambling makes sense. It succeeds in a mood of despair and hopelessness, a mood of moral relativism and atheism, but it doesn't belong with biblical Christianity. It is a sin to be avoided and, bless God, a sin to be forgiven.

Father, we come to You now as we close this service, a time at Your table, asking that You would forgive the sin of gambling in the lives of any of us where that sin exists. Wash it away and give strength over that in the future. Help us to understand the biblical issues that are involved in this. Lord, this sin of gambling is but one of a myriad of sins. For some of us it doesn't relate, like the sin of homosexuality, or the sin of robbery, or whatever, but, Lord, there are sins that we do relate to. We all have our areas, our arenas of spiritual war in the heart and we come now to this, Your table, knowing that this is the time to confess those sins, to repent of those sins, to turn from those sins, to affirm a new devotion to walk with You in obedience so that we might be blessed, that we might bring honor to Your name. We know we can't take the bread and the cup, the Apostle Paul said, if there's any sin, so may we examine ourselves right now so that we can partake in a worthy manner. We confess our sins and seek Your forgiveness.

And, Lord, for those who have struggled with gambling, forgive them, Lord, and restore them and give them strength over that seductive habit that they may be good stewards and worshipers of the true and living God, the only God, the God who sovereignly controls everything. In the name of Your Son we pray. Amen.

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