

hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:4b, 10). Elijah allowed his emotions to create a "reality" that was not real. The Lord made sure that the prophet got some food and a needed rest, and then proceeded to tell him about the 7,000 who were faithful in Israel (1 Kings 19:18). God then sent him back to work!

Please resist the temptation to withdraw and count all brethren as unfaithful because of your experience with certain men. You must fight the temptation to conclude that you can read the minds of others and thus write them off because of your "instincts." In many ways you will become just like the ones who hurt you in these kinds of unrighteous judgments (John 7:24). When you withdraw from brethren that love you into the cold and isolated world of self-pity, then things will only get worse. It has been said that self-pity is a slow and very painful form of suicide.

Learn the Power of Thanksgiving

When we open our eyes to what God has done and is doing for us, then we will not make ourselves the "center of the universe." *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7). Which will you choose -- thanksgiving or self-pity? The 3 "L's" of self-pity are these: "What I have Lost, What I Lack, and How I am Limited." So much of our disposition de-

pends upon what we choose to focus on. As one man related "I complained because I had no shoes until I met someone who had no feet." In contrast the thankful man sees the blessings of God and speaks with the apostle Paul saying: *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18).

A man of faith will be optimistic and full strength. A Biblical faith will teach you how to deal with the issues of life and especially how to overcome adversity. This stand will make you a blessing in the lives of others rather than an isolated cynic. Do you really believe in God? It is my prayer that you will let your thoughts become conformed to God's thoughts. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Romans 12:2).

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The Voice of Truth



April 4, 2010

Is the Stock Market Gambling?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Some contend that every form of taking a chance is gambling, and is wrong. Others contend that we take chances every time we step outside the house, and thus that gambling is not wrong. The truth lies somewhere between those two extremes. Let's first define gambling. Assorted dictionaries define gambling as *to play games of chance for money, to risk money on uncertain gain, to stake or risk money, etc. in the hope of great gain.*

Gambling occurs in a variety of forms in our society: card games, throwing dice, slot machines, betting on horse or dog races, buying sweepstakes or raffle tickets, betting on sporting events, buying lottery tickets, playing bingo for money or prizes, and even pitching pennies. The reason it is wrong is because it appeals to greed, to the idea of getting something for nothing and profiting from someone else's loss - all of which are condemned in the Scriptures. Everyone who gambles is hoping to win money from others, and no one wants to lose the money they gamble. This fundamental facet of gambling is in direct conflict with the heart and core of Christianity as stated by Jesus in **Matthew 7:12**. By definition, the gambler is treating others the way he, himself, does not want to be treated. He wishes to take the money of others but does not want them to take his money.

Thus, gambling is wrong because it is based in lust and greed, or the love of money (**1 Timothy 6:10**). God wants us to work in order to secure funding for daily living for self, family, and the needy (**1 Timothy 5:8; Galatians 6:10**). But making money to live is very different from living to make money.

Someone may say it is okay to gamble since all of life is a gamble. While living life

entails risk, it does not match the components characteristic of the gambling we've been discussing. When a farmer plants a crop, he is acting in harmony with the work ethic. If his crop fails, no one else loses. He is not attempting to take through chance the possessions of others. They live by the principle, the laborer is worthy of his hire (**1 Timothy 5:18**), and they seek a financial return for their investment and labor. That is not gambling, even though some chance is involved. It is Biblical.

But, what about the stock market? When you buy stock in Wal-Mart, IBM, Microsoft, etc., you are actually investing money in that company. The investor who puts money into a corporation is doing so to help the corporation succeed. He's not attempting to take what belongs to others. Products and services are being provided for the community. By no means is the investor seeking to take money without giving something in return. Is it wrong to invest in the stock market? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** ♦

"Your Value"

By Jarrod Jacobs

If anyone wants to know his actual value, consider the value God and Satan have placed upon you. You see, by words and actions, they have placed a value or worth upon each one of us. What is it?

Satan's Estimate Of Man's Value

We get a good idea of what Satan thinks man is worth in **Matthew 4**. This text records the account of one of Christ's temptations. Read **Matthew 4:1-11** (or **Luke 4:1-13**) for the entire context. We will focus upon **Matthew 4:8-9** where it says, *"Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high moun-*

*Don't be afraid of opposition –
A kite rises against the wind, not with it.*

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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tain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Perhaps we have read this before and wondered what use Christ would have with the buildings, gold, silver, etc., of the world. The truth is, He has no use for such things (**Ps. 50:10; Acts 17:24-25**). In truth, Satan, being the "god of this world", "the prince of this world" and "the prince of the power of the air" (**II Cor. 4:8-9; Jn. 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; Eph. 2:2**) was not offering Jesus buildings and lands, but was offering Him **the people, the souls** who occupied those lands!

In simple terms, Christ was offered every soul's subjection by Satan. Christ was tempted to avoid the cross, the suffering, the rejection, and all, by just worshipping Satan! Think about it: This is Satan's estimation of every person! He would gladly give away every person on earth if he could just have Christ as his servant! To him, you and I are but pawns in his twisted, selfish work.

God's Estimate Of Man's Value

In contrast with Satan, God's estimate of man's value is far different. Instead of looking for things He might consider more "valuable" than us, God sent His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for us (**Jn. 3:16**). This sacrifice was first promised in **Genesis 3:15**, and as we read the Bible, we see this "theme" of redemption echoing throughout its pages. God's redemption for man is offered to us out of love and mercy so that we do not die in our sins (**Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:6-8**).

When Jesus stood before Pilate, He declared that He had come into this world to die (**Jn. 18:36-37**). His was a selfless sacrifice where He gave Himself to die upon the cross so that the souls of humanity could be saved from sin (**I Pet. 1:18-19**). Is there not a clearer contrast between Satan's estimation of man and God's?

God And Satan's Estimate Of Christ's Value

Before we move on, we must also note something special about Christ's value. Notice that Satan thought Christ was so valuable that he was ready to trade all of humanity just so Christ would worship him (**Matt. 4:8-9**). Though he has the worship and following of so many, he was ready to give up all humanity for Christ! This tells us the value Satan placed on Christ.

In contrast, we see God looking to Christ as the **only One** who could be the sacrifice for man (**Rev. 13:8b**). No one else could be the sacrifice, for no one else could accomplish what was necessary (ex: **Ezek. 14:12-20; Jn. 1:29**).

Again, we see our value when we reflect on Christ's value. **Matthew 4** reveals Satan plotting a way to get Christ to sin by discarding man. Thus, spiritual harm would come to all. In contrast, God planned a way to preserve man through Christ so that humanity can be in Heaven with Christ (**II Pet. 3:9**)!

Conclusion

Now that we understand Satan's and God's estimation of our value, why are we continuing to fall into Satan's snares (**Jas. 1:14-15; I Jn. 2:15-17**)? Satan does not love us. He is a liar and murderer from the beginning (**Jn. 8:44**). He lurks and hunts for folks to devour (**I Pet. 5:8**). He makes sin seem so sweet, lovely, and fulfilling; yet it is full of rottenness and filth (**Heb. 11:26; II Pet. 2:19-22**).

Let us stop falling for his lies. Let us open our eyes and see the truth. God loves us and has provided the best for us. He has given us a way to be saved (**Mk. 16:16**), and if we will be faithful for our short lives (**Jas. 4:14**), we can enjoy an eternity in Heaven (**Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 4:6-8; Rom. 8:16-18; II Cor. 4:17**). While on earth, we see that we are blessed people when we belong to Him (**Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 3:10-12**). We are truly valuable to God. To Him, we are priceless; to Satan, we are worthless! Why not leave sin and selfishness and follow

the only One who believes we have real value. Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

Where Will Your Hurt Lead You?

By Larry Rouse

Over the years I have witnessed the reactions of Christians to the terrible experience of being divorced from their mate. In most of these cases their mate had participated in numerous affairs and the faithful Christian tried but failed to restore their loved one. They then applied the only scriptural grounds for divorce the Lord gave and put away their unfaithful mate. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (**Matthew 19:9**). While these Christians were indeed innocent of the breaking up their marriage, they now had to face the very difficult task of rebuilding their lives and seeking to heal their wounded spirit.

Regardless of the cause of the hurt, if it be divorce, death, betrayal, or some other cause, this presents an opportunity for Satan to take advantage of us in our hurt (**2 Cor. 2:11**). This is a major challenge to our faith. Will we let our emotions and thus our flesh direct us in the ways of the world or will we walk by faith? Will you let God or your hurt lead you? The obvious choice is easy to recognize but very difficult to practice.

Learn to Give to God the Things You Cannot Change

Satan's greatest success comes when a Christian is overburdened. Over time he will seek relief from his burden that will often involve sin. Jesus knows that we have a "load limit" and He pleads with us to let Him carry the burden that we cannot. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (**Matthew 11:28-30**). Jesus gives us

responsibilities that we can handle! When we stay within the "yoke" given by our Lord then our faith will grow and our wounded spirit will heal.

We need to apply a simple bit of wisdom and distinguish between God's bearable burden and the unbearable burdens we are tempted to carry. This truth is well stated in this common quote, "'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.'" Consider this short list of things that fall into this category. I cannot change the past, what is right and wrong, death, the weather, and many other things. One other practical but major item is this, I cannot change another person against their will. If you fail to recognize these things and then refuse to give them to God, you will, in time, become a "burnt-out" disciple, full of cynicism and doubt. Why not trust God and give these things to Him?

Learn to Slam the Door on Self-Pity

Have you ever heard this children's song: "Nobody loves me, everybody hates me. I'm going out and eat worms?" This is a perfect description of one having a "pity-party." Have you ever reasoned like this, "People are talking about me. Nobody understands my feelings! There is no one on earth who has suffered as me. Nobody cares. I do not deserve this.?" If so, then you are walking down the road of self-pity and if you are not careful it will run and then ruin your life.

Great men of God, at times, struggled with these feelings. Elijah, after a physically and emotionally exhausting day in which he defeated the prophets of Baal, received word of a death threat from Jezebel the queen (**1 Kings 19:1**). The emotions of Elijah caused him to flee into the wilderness and plea to God for his own death. He then claimed that he was the only one left that cared about God and there was no more need to try. "And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers! ... ¹⁰So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God of