

“Where Can I Get Christian Movie Reviews?”

There are two excellent Web sites that provide Christian reviews of movies:

1. Movieguide

www.movieguide.org

2. Crosswalk Movie Reviews

www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/

There is also a conservative movie review Web site you might want to check: www.screenit.com

Kerby Anderson

Probe Ministries

“What’s the Difference Between Gambling and Investing?”

Can you explain the difference between gambling and investing?
Thanks in advance.

Thank you for your e-mail and question about the differences between gambling and investing. There are a number of Christian authors who have addressed this issue (Norm Geisler, Tony Evans, Gary North, etc.).

Briefly let me say that there are some similarities, and there are people who get addicted to high risk investing just like gambling. So I would acknowledge there are some similarities between the two.

But the key issue is that there are some striking differences. Investors research an investment with the goal of lowering the risks and making a wise investment. Gambling is all about risk and the odds cannot be lowered by further research (except for those who can modify the odds of blackjack by card counting or something like that).

The goal of investing is to build up a company and portfolio. Even if it's done selfishly, it still can have a positive effect on the company and the economy. Gambling takes money out of the capital economy. It doesn't contribute to job creation, etc. As I argue in [my transcript on gambling](#), gambling actually hurts a local economy and increases social costs (abuse, neglect, bankruptcy).

Most investing is done with discretionary income and with certain limits (amount of stock that can be bought on margin, debt load allowed by a lender, etc.). Most gambling is not done with discretionary income. Money that should go for food, rent, clothing is often risked in a "get-rich-quick" scheme.

So while I would acknowledge that investing and gambling have some similarities, the differences make the difference. If you are interested, I would encourage you to read some additional material by some of the authors I mentioned.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“Do You Have Statistics on Cohabitation?”

Do you have any statistics which indicate the dangers of cohabiting and the results on a relationship?

Thank you for your e-mail about cohabitation. Of course, the Bible has something to say about this subject, but let me focus merely on the statistics. (If you are looking for specific citations of these statistics, please see my article [Cohabitation](#). It has 17 citation-rich endnotes.)

Research by Christians and non-Christians in this field consistently finds that living together before you are married will significantly increase your likelihood of a future divorce. There are lots of studies done in this field you would read, but here is a brief summary of the statistical facts about cohabitation:

1. Percentage of Americans who have cohabited at one time or another: 50%
2. Percentage of cohabiting couples who go on to marry: 50-60%
3. Percentage of cohabiting relationships involving children: 40%
4. Percentage of unions that survive two years:
5. Cohabiting unions not leading to marriage: 33%
6. Marital unions: 95%
7. Percentage of unions that survive ten years:
8. Cohabiting unions not leading to marriage: 12%
9. Marital unions: 90%
10. Likelihood of divorce within first ten years of marriage:

Those who cohabit prior to marriage are almost twice as likely to divorce as opposed to those who do not cohabit prior to marriage.

As you can see, living together before you are married can affect your marriage in a deleterious way. Christian and secular research is validating what the Bible has been saying all along.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“Do You Have More Information on School Discipline Problems?”

In the late 1940s teachers listed the worst problems they faced in school as chewing gum, running in the hall, etc. A few years ago teachers listed some violent crimes as the worst problems. Do you have more detail on this?

One example often used to demonstrate social decline is the list of discipline problems in the public schools. Usually the list contrasts school problems 50 years ago with those today.

Supposedly the top problems in the schools 50 years ago were: talking, chewing gum, running in the halls, making noise, getting out of line, violating the dress code, and littering. According to the survey, today's school problems are: drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, suicide, rape, and robbery.

Unfortunately, the school discipline list is an invention. The lists are not the result of research or surveys. The first list (50 years ago) catalogues daily disturbances. The second list (today) is actually composed of items from a “Safe School” questionnaire. To read more about these school

discipline lists, see Barry O'Neill, "The invention of the school discipline lists," *School Administrator*, 51 (1994): 8-11. I would NOT recommend you use these lists to demonstrate social decline.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate social and moral decline in this country would be to cite many of the statistics in Bill Bennett's book *Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) or at the Empower America Web Site (www.empower.org). These show a dramatic change in social statistics from 1960 and use respected instruments of measurement.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

"Should Christians Give the Pledge of Allegiance?"

Should Christians give the pledge of allegiance?

Your question is an old one. First century Christians struggled with how much allegiance (if any) they were to give to Rome. The founders of this country struggled with it as well.

At one extreme you have the Jehovah's Witnesses (who do not pledge because they believe it is idolatry). At the other extreme you have Christians with a mindset of "my country right or wrong." A proper biblical response is somewhere in the middle.

Romans 13 tells us to obey those in authority. Other passages allow for civil disobedience (Acts 5:29, Daniel, etc.).

Christians who live in a country with a godly government shouldn't have much concern about a pledge of allegiance. However, Christians who lived in, say Nazi Germany, might legitimately have reservations about a pledge of allegiance in that country.

I believe that if a Christian feels that it would be wrong for him or her to pledge allegiance, then I believe he or she should refrain. But if Christians then concludes it is wrong for every other Christian to do so, they are mandating a standard of behavior that I do not believe can be found in Scripture. Obviously Jesus Christ deserves our total allegiance, but I don't believe that a pledge of allegiance to a country undermines that.

Even though this issue doesn't necessarily involve the issue of civil disobedience, you might want to look at [Civil Disobedience, my transcript on the topic](#), at the Probe web page (www.probe.org) as well as some of my other writings on Christians and government.

Thanks for writing. I hope this helps.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“Does Capital Punishment Take Away a Person's Chance to Be Saved?”

I have a question concerning your article [“Capital Punishment,”](#) in which you discussed the biblical perspective

on the death punishment. My question is, does capital punishment take away a person's chance to be saved? Don't we all have the time to accept Christ until we die, and doesn't the death punishment cut short that chance? I'd appreciate your comment on that. I'm currently looking into the issue of capital punishment, and your article has helped a great deal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for your e-mail about capital punishment.

I believe that the overriding concern with capital punishment is whether it is just, whether it is biblical, and whether it is a deterrent. I believe I addressed those issues in my essay.

Your question is an interesting one, but maybe not central to a person's belief in or against capital punishment. However, let me address it, if I can.

I have heard some argue that the prospect of being put to death focuses a criminal's attention on what he or she did and how that might affect their eternal destiny. A person on death row usually knows when he or she will be put to death—something that the person they murdered didn't know. Perhaps that would cause them to accept Christ. I know of many examples of murderers on death row accepting Christ. I wonder how many of them would have done so if they weren't on death row.

The death penalty might cut short their life, but I don't think it would necessarily cut short their opportunity to accept Christ. In fact, it may actually force many criminals to make a decision they might have otherwise postponed.

Again, I don't think this would be a compelling argument against the death penalty. It's an interesting question, and I hope I helped you think through it a little bit better.

Thank you for writing.

“Is a Raffle the Same as Gambling?”

Is a raffle the same as gambling? For example, the church has an article and they ask the brethren to buy a ticket for two dollars, then they will pick one ticket and that person whose number they pull will get that article. What does the Bible say on the subject? Please help me. I think it is gambling but there are others who do not think so.

I know of many churches that sponsor various forms of gambling (Bingo games, raffles, etc.). So your question is not unique.

At the outset, let me acknowledge that there are some differences between gambling in secular arenas and inside the church. The goal of a church-sponsored event is fund-raising, often for a good cause. The goal is not so much to win a large prize but to contribute to a good cause with the possibility of winning something.

But that distinction is often lost on those affected by gambling. Because I have written on the subject of gambling, I have been in contact with many people whose lives have been shattered by an addiction to gambling. For them, the distinction between gambling outside of church and inside church is irrelevant. Their lives have been adversely affected by gambling.

Many Christians have been writing books in the last few years about gambling, calling for the church to provide help and

counseling for gamblers and their families. But I would argue that a church loses its moral authority to help those struggling with gambling. How can you reach out to gamblers and their families devastated by casino gambling, racetrack gambling, or lottery gambling when your church sponsors Bingo games and raffles?

Moreover, a Bible-centered church should be a refuge from the world. People addicted to gambling need a safe place to escape the temptations of the world. When we bring gambling into the church, it is no longer a place where an addict can escape from the world.

Norman Geisler in his book *Gambling: A Bad Bet* addresses the argument that gambling must be OK since “they do it in the church.” He points out that churches do all sorts of things that can’t be morally justified. Cults have promoted sexual orgies, “divine deception,” and all sorts of corruption. That doesn’t make it right. He and I would argue that even though gambling may help a church raise money for a good cause, we shouldn’t use questionable means for a good end. The means and the ends must be moral. As one clergyman put it, “We don’t need to use the devil’s water to operate the Lord’s mill.”

Gambling is wrong wherever it takes place. I would encourage you to download my [article on gambling](#). It provides a biblical perspective on this issue. I believe these biblical principles apply to gambling outside the church and inside the church. Thank you for writing.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“Why Do Christians Have to Bash Pop Psychology?”

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I was just browsing the Probe Ministries website and read parts of your article about [Pop Psychology Myths](#).

Honestly, I just don't get it. Well, I should tell you I come from a strong Christian background, involved in Campus Crusade, youth groups, church ministries etc. But sometime during my senior year of college I just about HAD IT with Christian culture and all their myths.

Why is it wrong to have self-esteem? I hid behind the Bible for years to make me feel good about myself, but I was never convinced. My personal calling isn't to humble myself to meekness, never thinking for myself, in order to be “godly.” I feel better, accomplish more, and fulfill the talents God has given me when I act in ways to help my self esteem, like taking good care of myself, being assertive in my writing career and not letting people walk all over me, like I used to do, when I was a walking sin-o-meter... Why is it so important to make rules and laws and lists of myths when the whole essence of Christianity is Grace and Love? Doesn't this fear of the world seem somewhat legalistic?

I really don't know where I am going with this, I am just so frustrated with Christians who spend all their time worrying about the “world's ways” when things just AREN'T so black and white. There is wisdom in pop psychology—some of it is just plain nonsense, but there is some wisdom, just as there is some wisdom in Taoism. For goodness sakes, a great deal of it parallels scripture.

Anyway, something to chew on. I very much respect your degrees and figured you may be open to some discussion on the subject.

Thanks for writing. I thought the book by Chris Thurman (*Self-Help or Self-Destruction*) that was a basis of my week of radio programs was very well written and discerning. Perhaps I should do another week of programs on the other five myths of pop psychology mentioned in the book so that the analysis would be more complete.

I don't think that my transcript (nor the book) denies that there is any wisdom in pop psychology. But I do think we should be more discerning, and that's what we were trying to convey in the program. Anyway, thanks for your opinion.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

China, The Olympics and Christians

When the 2008 Olympics were awarded to China back in 2001, there was a naive hope that this decision would change China and also lead to an improvement in human rights. It turns out that instead of changing China, it may have changed us.

One example of this can be seen in our country. When the Olympic torch was carried through various cities in the world, it was protected not only by the local authorities but also by the Chinese secret police. So when the torch came to San Francisco, once again the Chinese secret police showed up. Now to be fair, the news reports actually said that they were volunteers from the Special Forces academy of the Peoples Armed Police. But a better description for them would be Chinas secret police.

This organization has been used to protect embassies in Beijing. But it has also been called upon to put down protests in Tibet and suppress protests and other forms of expression in China. They were described by the chairman of the 2012 London Olympic committee as thugs. Others described their tactics as aggressive.

It is amazing to me that we allowed these secret police in our country, but it illustrates my point. We thought that these trade overtures and the Olympics would change China. In the long run, they may have a positive impact. But so far it seems like we are the ones who have changed.

There was also the naive hope that bringing the Olympics to China would usher in an era of improved human rights in this communist country. It appears that in some ways the situation is worse. China has invested time and money in preparing for the Olympics. It appears they have also done all they can to rid the nation of anyone who could be seen as a dissident.

For decades, China has been rounding up Christians and other dissidents. They have been beaten and thrown in jail. Some have been killed. Lord David Alton estimates that each year 8,000 executions take place in China. Those who escape this persecution must live in a society where political and religious opinion is repressed, where journalists are jailed, and where the Internet and overseas broadcasts are censored.

The Chinese constitution promises its citizens that they have freedom of religious belief. But we know better. While there is an official state church, most of the growth (and the perceived potential threat to the government) takes place in the underground churches. As we get closer to the Olympics, the government seems bent on doing more to smash the growing home church movement.

As Christians we should be in prayer about what is taking place in China. But a growing debate has centered on what the

U.S. government should do. Some have called for President Bush to boycott the opening ceremonies. They believe this would be a strong statement of our repudiation of the practices of the Chinese government. Others have suggested that President Bush go and use the Olympics as a platform to speak out against the Chinese government.

I see merit in either action. What is unacceptable is the current policy of silence. The president, his administration, and even corporate sponsors have been silent about what has been going on for decades. Now even the secular world is calling for action because of China's policy toward Tibet. It is time for all of us (Christians included) to break our silence and speak out.

© 2008 Probe Ministries

Do We Need a “Hate Crimes” Law?

April 4, 2007

Congress is once again weighing the possibility of passing a hate crimes bill that would give special federal protection based upon race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX) introduced the David Ray Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 (HR 254) in January. Many believe that if the bill is passed, it could open the door to prohibit any opposition to homosexuality whether in the church or the society at large.

It is quite possible that hate crimes legislation might even

be used to define biblical language as hate speech. For example, city officials have already had a billboard removed in Long Island, NY, because it was classified as hate speech. The billboard read: If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. (Leviticus 20:13)

Consider how hate crimes legislation in Philadelphia was used against Christians. In 2004, six men and five women were arrested in Philadelphia while preaching and speaking during a public homosexual celebration known as OutFest. These Christians (later known as the Philadelphia Eleven) walked into the gathering singing hymns and carrying signs encouraging homosexuals to repent. They were immediately confronted by a militant group of gay activists known as the Pink Angels. These activists blew loud whistles and carried large pink signs in front of the Christians in order to block their message and access to the event. Many of the gay activists screamed obscenities at the Christians.

Those arrested ranged in age from a 17-year-old girl to a 72-year-old grandmother. After spending twenty-one hours in jail, the Philadelphia District Attorneys office charged five of them with various felonies and misdemeanors stemming from Pennsylvanias hate crimes law. If the Philadelphia Eleven were convicted of these charges, they would have faced forty-seven years in prison and \$90,000 in fines each.

Even though a video clearly showed that no criminal activity took place, the prosecution refused to withdraw the charges, and characterized the groups views in court as hate speech. The judge for the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas Judge finally dismissed the charges, saying that she found no basis whatsoever for any of them.[\[1\]](#)

But even apart from the concerns about how a hate crimes law could be used to promote the homosexual agenda are deeper concerns about hate crimes legislation in general. For

example, there is a major question whether hate crimes are really the problem the popular press makes them out to be. The FBI annually publishes Hate Crime Statistics. The most recent report shows that hate crimes reached an eight-year low in the last reporting period. A study by the Family Research Council found that there are significant discrepancies between hate crimes reported by law enforcement and the media.[{2}](#)

Hate crimes laws also rest on the flawed assumption that enhanced penalties deter crimes. First, there is no evidence of this. Most of these crimes are crimes of passion and are not likely to be influenced by greater criminal penalties. Second, the argument for greater deterrence usually comes from those who argue that the death penalty has no deterrent effect. Do they really believe that a hate crime law deters a criminal simply because he or she might spend a few extra months in jail?

A final objection to these laws is that they criminalize thought rather than conduct. Hate crimes laws essentially punish thought crimes. They punish people because of their point of view. Criminal prosecutions delve into more than the defendant's intent; they inquire into the opinions about his or her victim. And trying to distinguish between opinions and prejudice is often difficult.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "If there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other it is the principle of free thought—not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought that we hate."[{3}](#)

We may not like what some people think, but we should not have laws on the books to punish thought crimes. We already have laws on the books to punish what a person does. Those laws are sufficient to punish those who commit crimes of hate.

Notes

1. "Judge drops all charges against Philly Christians," *WorldNetDaily*, 17 February 2005, www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=42905.
2. Leah Farish, "Hate Crimes: Beyond Virtual Reality," Family Research Council, www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=IS03K01.
3. Oliver Wendell Holmes, *United States v. Schwimmer* 279 U.S. 644 (1929).

© 2007 Probe Ministries