

Texas Hold'em Poker

By John Van Sloten

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[“ROUNDERS” CLIP 4:40 – 5:57... “just waiting”]

[Remember poker in HS... Darcy Swinburne’s place... (hide from parents/gambling and church)... Ian Holiday... Scott Campbell... Jeff Wormald... Malcolm played all kinds of games... LOO dilemma... lost \$30. bothered me for weeks... **LONG PAUSE**]

But man were those poker nights **fun... & dangerous** (compulsive teen that I was...) [STAT – 3 times more likely to be problem gambler if gamble as a teen!]

Anyway... never became a problem for me, thank God! (“\$20. says I can stop playing any time!” ...) Oh, BTW... re: my ‘personal poker’ stories “What happens in church stays in church!”

OK... Texas Hold'em... today’s sermon topic! (today’s topic/c its a trend currently sweeping the globe!

[INDIGO]... all over TV/news... Desperate

housewives playing on Sunday... “Do you realize that the 2004 World Series of *Poker* drew bigger ratings on ESPN than the first two games of the last Stanley Cup finals? Sports Ill, 10/24/2004

Poker is huge!... Texas Hold'em Grand-daddy of all poker games! **LONG PAUSE**... As I’ve observed the phenomenon’s growth “What’s going on here? Why is this happening (God)? What’s it say about us (human beings)? **More NB “Say about You?”**

Started research Bible Study try find command, “**Thou shalt not playeth illicit card games for money**” “**He that goeth ‘all in’ shall surely suffer!**”

not there!! (far as I could see) no direct biblical admonition agin it... if anything ‘activities of chance’

shown in positive light (Lots for land, choosing an apostle, discerning God’s will well known “Urim/Thummim!” ultimate high rollers I guess!)

No direct “**You shall not gamble...**” But all kinds of tangential teachings had direct application...

“**Love God first in life**” if spending more time/\$ on cards! (first commandment “No other gods before me)

“**Be careful not to fall in love with money**”... “love of loot is the root of all evil” READ 1 Tim 6:9-10 (NLT) not sure Paul had an addicted gambler in mind... but

Then there’s all the **money related** problems that can arise **Greed (more for self), Envy (other have), Coveting**... Poker is also a highly individual, zero-sum game... “It is brutal and primal, filled with duplicity and deception. It is not for the weak kneed or the kind hearted. You must play with rapacity and ruthlessness. You must play with a cut-throat cunning. You must play with one overriding rationale in mind: to accumulate someone else’s - everyone else’s – money.” kind of hard to reconcile with, “**Love your neighbour as self**” “Do unto others...” Imagine #1 Daniel Negreanu, “**Pocket aces... How can I best love Doyle Brunson with this hand?**” Imagine Johnny Chan thinking “**If I were Chris MoneyMaker... how would I want me to play?**”

PAUSE... Then there’s the whole concept of “**chance** vs. idea of **God’s providence**” to consider... does one believe that God provides all needs or that it’s merely fate... chance... “odds” that we need to play!

LONG PAUSE... “Alright, alright, I get the point!!!... addictive gambling can be problematic, taken too far spiritual damage... but seriously... I play with friends on a Sat. night... \$20. max... a night of entertainment... **just a game** surely that’s not a problem... **right?...**”

RIGHT ... PAUSE... no different than other games than other “good parts of creation” OK if used in healthy context Just like **glass merlot is... gift of sex is... well deserved break is... PAUSE...** They only become problems when lead to ... **alcoholism... porn addiction... sloth... [Idols]... replace God!!** But used in a healthy way... within a healthy relationship with God??... Can't say it's a big problem **RISK knowing how much you can handle!...** like a good glass of wine sometimes caught off guard!

How protect against that?... **Know Thyself... Know God... PAUSE...** Let's start with **knowing selves...** “**What is it in us that is so attracted to games like Texas Hold'em?**” why so much intrigue? **PAUSE**

1. Risk... I think we are made to risk!... God built a capacity to gamble right into our spiritual DNA... **God made us** with ability/desire put it all on the line live on adrenalized edge... **to go “all in” [DESCRIBE]** we're made to experience that **‘fully alive’ place... what people experience game of poker a taste meant to experience in real life.. Xtreme sports same thing... doing business deal... LONG PAUSE..**

this what faith is, right? Risking your whole life on God... **Abraham's** willing leave home... **PAUSE...** **Stephen** getting stoned...even **Jesus** “leaving home”

“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life. And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose or forfeit your own soul in the process?” LK 9 25-7 NLT

You're **meant to put you soul on the line... PAUSE** **Think about that next time go “all in” meant to do that with all of life... (be a spiritual habit??)**

(the **O who took risk free will**, put creation in our hands... **choose to love/follow/obey him** did this!)

(another reason so attracted?) **2. Meant to win the final pot...** hit jackpot... win prize!... “You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.” 1 Cor 9:23-5 To be human is to know victory... **(receive reward ... know glory, it's different than WPT Cash/beer toast win that comes via known by God... fully loved, treasured...gaining a heavenly treasure... fully you!... Eternal win get God (God gets you)!**

PAUSE... A lot of sports/activities *do* this what really hit me this week the **risk /reward connection** in poker so much like risk/reward connection of God's Grace!! **PAUSE... God's way** “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” Eph 2:8-9, niv

What we get from God **totally unmerited... free gift! via Amazing Grace!.. PAUSE... you go “all in” get bigger prize could have ever imagined... (totally disproportionate)... you win it all... find God!**

We're meant for that...**to get it all and not deserve it! ... feel that unmerited grace feeling...**

I think whole **poker/gambling thing hits that nerve! ‘risk/reward disproportion’... ridiculous unfairness** of poker **especially** does that!!... touches the deepest most meaningful thing human beings are ever meant to know/ experience... **PAUSE... Grace!**

He does this **b/c loves us so much!...** b/c meant to play in a “**house**’ like that... w/those **kinds of rules...** w/those **kind of odds** (deck stacked totally your favour!)

PAUSE... We get taste of it Poker game... Real players probably know it even more... but ultimately fall short...

Only way ultimately play/ satisfied through Jesus Christ... risked it all get the whole grace thing going!
Who went 'all in' so **we could all get in**... "find true life"

VERY SLOW... God wants you to have this... dealt you in... you're part of his game... **"And it's your call!"**