

What Are the Odds?

This is a phrase we often hear and probably use ourselves. The expression “what are the odds” itself is an idiom. An idiom is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words, e.g., rain cats and dogs, see the light” (Free Dictionary).

So, when we use “what are the odds” we refer to how likely we think something is to happen. Odds are used extensively in gambling. Bookmakers or “Bookies” will set certain odds for any range of betting topics from professional sports to the next Pope or the upcoming election. “If you can think it, you can bet on it” according to Joseph Del Duca, head of communications at VGW, a social gaming platform. The odds represent the ratio between the amounts staked by parties to a wager or bet. Thus, odds of 10 to 1 mean the first party (normally the bookmaker) stakes ten times the amount staked by the second party (the gambler). Simply speaking, “odds” is the term used to describe the chances a person placing a bet has of winning. In gambling:

- Odds are the chances of winning
- Odds are always against the person placing the bet
- The “house” always has the edge

No matter how sweet or enticing the odds may seem, it is always in favor of the house. There is always a risk. While risks can be calculated into odds, there's always *chance*. The longer you gamble; the more likely the chance is you will lose. It is the "world's system." Take it from me, in my younger days, I'd get paid Friday, head to the casinos in Atlantic City and be broke by Monday. People love to gamble and gamble on anything.

How about us? Do we gamble with our time and walk with God? Do we take for granted and roll the dice that we will always have enough time to "get it right?" (**Prov. 19:15, 24:30, Matt. 24:36, 42, 50, 25:13, Heb. 6:12**).

Many people who develop problems associated with their gambling have the false belief that they will be able to 'beat the system', while others may not understand that the odds are against them and that over time, they will lose money or in our case, *eternity*. Much like professing Sunday "Churcker's", gamblers try to beat the system by "hedging" their bets, betting from different angles to gain increase in some form. Talking the talk but not walking *THE* walk. Being a good person doesn't cut it. Reading the Bible doesn't cut it. Knowing what it says doesn't cut it. Doing what it says to do will put you on the right track. The true Christian walking in God's Way, being obedient to His Commandments has the potential to overcome the system (**John 16:33, Rom. 12:21, 1 John 4:4, 5:4-5, Rev.2:26, 3:5**,

12, 21, 21:7). The hedge they seek will be placed about us *by* Our Creator (**Job 1:10**).

The odds of hitting the lottery or Powerball are astronomical. More than a third of Americans believe winning the lottery is the only way they will ever retire comfortably. But the odds of winning either the Powerball or Mega Millions are roughly **1 in 292.2 million and 1 in 302.6 million**, respectively. Yep, that's man's way of thinking, "I need things to enjoy life." God's Way is He gives us life to enjoy things. So, don't expect Ed McMahon to knock on your door with a check from Publisher's Clearinghouse either. No, not just because he's dead but because the odds are Publishers Clearing House has said your chances of winning a top prize such as the \$7,000 a week for life are "in the hundreds of millions." Other estimates place your odds at 1 in 1.7 billion (nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ the population of the Earth). To put that in perspective, your odds of winning the Powerball lottery jackpot are 1 in 292 million. Compared to the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes, that's practically a sure thing. History has shown us that with man, nothing is a sure thing, except how to pervert the things of God.

We need not look for tips, hints or anything outside of God's Word. We do not need to "handicap" a race, only finish the one we are in (**1 Cor. 9:24, 2 Tim. 4:7, Heb. 12:1**). We've been given a set of "astronomical odds" from God Himself

through His Word and through His Son Jesus Christ. To put things in a biblical perspective, risk is eliminated as our new odds individually are 1 to 1. For everyone who has ever lived it would be 113 billion to 1. God is The Only Sure Thing.

Now make no mistake about it. God is NOT a gambler. He does everything with purpose and by Divine Design (**Ecc. 3:1, 14, Rom. 8:28, Eph. 1:11**). He is not the author of confusion (**1 Cor. 14:33**). Jesus gave His life for us which is the ultimate ante. God gave His only Son that we would not have to perish (**Matt. 18:14, John 3:15-16, 10:28, 2 Pet. 3:9**). When we step through the door and commit ourselves, we symbolically bet the rest of our lives on God's Way of life. God requires our life, all of it. All in. We can't hold any chips in our pocket. There is no turning back (**Luke 9:62**). But the deck is stacked in our favor if we do what His Word says to do. The greatest prize in the universe is no gamble, it's a gift.

While we may never hit the lottery or win big at a casino, we have already been given the greatest prize imaginable, greater than Charlie Buckets' Golden Ticket, better than a fistful of winning lottery tickets; we've been given God's promise of eternal life in His Kingdom (**John 17:3, Rom. 6:23, Titus 1:2, 1 John 2:25, 5:11, 13**).

