

“UNDERSTANDING ISLAM” with Brother Ghaffar on KCAA -- **SHOW #24** (02-16-2010)

SHOW: #24 TITLE: *“Why Islam Forbids Gambling.”*

AIR TIME: between 9:20am and 9:30am DATE: Tuesday, February 16th, 2010

PAUL: It’s time now for “Understanding Islam” with Br. Ghaffar from the Chino Mosque. . . Welcome back to the show, Br. Ghaffar. . . As-Salaam Alaikum: Peace be upon you.

Ghaffar: Wa alaikum salaam, Paul. May peace and blessings be upon you and upon all of our listeners.

PAUL: Now, for the past two weeks we’ve talked about alcohol and why Islam forbids it completely, and how the Bible condemns alcohol abuse but doesn’t forbid it outright. This week’s topic on “Understanding Islam” is entitled: “Why Islam Forbids Gambling.” And I understand you have a personal perspective on why gambling is bad. . .

Ghaffar: Yes, Paul, I do. As you know, I’m a convert to Islam, and maybe because I’m also Caucasian, I often get a shocked look from people when they learn I’m Muslim.

PAUL: Some people think only Middle-Eastern or black people can be Muslim -- that Islam is a racial or ethnic religion.

Ghaffar: Some people think that, but it’s not true. So there I was at the Black History Expo in Riverside this past Saturday, and a guy from India stops in front of the “Ahmadiyya” book table I’m manning and exclaims: “You’re a white Muslim!” I was tempted to say, “And you, sir, were not burdened by an over-abundance of schooling.”

But what I DO often say to people who ask my why I became a Muslim, is that I was born and raised in Las Vegas. Lost Wages. Sin City.

PAUL: Meaning. . . you witnessed the down-side of gambling.

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Ghaffar: Truth be told, I figured out pretty quick that there was something wrong with the whole picture. Even as a child, I remember seeing the fear and despair on the faces of people who had lost all their money gambling.

And when I looked at all the glittering casinos with their neon signs and flashing lights, I said to myself, “You know, all these expensive buildings couldn’t possibly be here if everyone who gambled won all the time.” In fact, I deduced fairly quickly that gamblers would have to lose most of the time for casinos to remain in business.

PAUL: Now, last week, Imam Shamshad quoted verses from the Quran on why alcohol was forbidden, and in those same verses, Games of Chance were mentioned as also being forbidden. But the Quran also said there was some good in these forbidden things. Explain this.

Ghaffar: OK. . . in Chapter 2, verse 220 it says: “They ask thee concerning wine and the game of chance. Say: ‘In both there is great sin and also *some* advantages for men; but their sin is greater than their advantage.” And in Chapter 5, verse 21, it says that alcohol and gambling both keep you away from prayer and the remembrance of God. And if you become addicted to either gambling or drinking, they become the god you bow down to.

PAUL: So what does the Holy Quran mean when it says there are some advantages to drinking and gambling?

Ghaffar: The Arabs used to hold gambling parties to raise funds for military expeditions and the like. It worked well.

PAUL: And what about drinking?

Ghaffar: Think about it: alcohol is the world’s first lie-detector.

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PAUL: Alcohol DOES loosen up a person’s tongue as well as their inhibitions. Alcohol impairs their ability to lie or keep a secret. There’s many a drunk who’s said things to his wife or girlfriend that he regrets when he’s sober.

Ghaffar: It’s a common knowledge that drinking brings out your true feelings and emotions, so in that sense it has real advantages in bringing to the surface a person’s desires and intentions, because under the influence of alcohol, these become more easily discernible and transparent.

PAUL: So what kind of stats were you able to find on gambling?

Ghaffar: I’m going to cite two sources: the first is the lobby for the Gaming Industry, the American Gaming Association, so you can bet – no pun intended – that their point of view is slanted heavily on the side of their Masters. The other source is the California Government, which has conducted numerous studies on state-wide gaming activities such as the Lottery, Card clubs and Indian casinos. The state government studies focused on the involvement or attempted control of state gaming by organized crime interests.

OK, from the legal gaming lobby, the AGA, we have this:
 Total U.S. gaming revenues for 2007. . . \$92.3-billion.
 Which break-downs as follows: Casinos, \$34.4-billion. . .
 Indian casinos, \$26-billion. . . Lotteries, \$24.8-billion.
 Horse tracks, \$3.5-billion. . . Bingo, \$2.2-billion. . .
 Card-rooms and card-clubs, \$1.2-billion. . . and legal
 book-making, sports betting and the like, \$170-million.

PAUL: And these are just the LEGAL gambling revenues. . .

Ghaffar: Yeah. The illegal, organized crime-controlled gambling revenues are estimated, conservatively, at 100-billion.

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PAUL: So when you add up those two numbers, and then add the costs of alcohol abuse to society, you’re looking at \$400-billion dollars a year or more in wasted money!

Ghaffar: Think what we could spend \$400-billion a year on to help America and its people. . . Free educations for everyone, free universal health care. . . But getting back to just the legal side of gambling. . . The AGA reported the Gross Gaming Revenues for 2008 for all commercial casinos was \$32-billion. From that, casinos paid \$14-billion in wages and benefits, \$5.6-billion in taxes, plus other expenses. Now, think for a second. What dollar amount is conspicuously missing from these billion-dollar sums?

PAUL: Casino operating costs would be included in “other expenses” which I’m guessing would be in the millions. So, the only thing NOT accounted for dollar-wise would be the amount of money casinos paid out in winnings.

Ghaffar: Exactly. And the reason you DON’T see that number listed is because if people saw the paltry amount of actual winnings paid out compared to the billions of dollars coming in, people would see immediately that, percentage-wise, you do NOT win at gambling and they would stop. Percentage-wise, the house ALWAYS wins.

PAUL: This is the Big Lie of the gambling industry. Just look at the TV ads for gambling, like for Las Vegas or for the Indian casinos. You always see people laughing, having fun, dancing, and winning big at the slots or the tables.

Ghaffar: You never see the actual reality of the majority of people who lose most of the time. This is the evil of gambling: tempting you with the prospect that, this time, YOU will be the lucky winner and go home with thousands, even millions of dollars. But statistically, it just won’t happen.

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PAUL: Look at the California Lottery. It was sold to us with the pitch that it would save schools by using lottery money to pay for new schools, books, higher teacher salaries. Does anybody know where the lottery money goes? It doesn't seem like our schools are getting that money.

Ghaffar: Which leads me to my next point: gambling and crime. Here's what the state of California website says on this: "Gambling is often associated with crime. The relationship is easy to understand. Many types of gambling have been, and indeed still are, illegal. Hence, by definition, criminals were the only operators of games. When gambling restrictions were relaxed, criminals were the first to open up legal gambling establishments. A lax regulatory framework in Nevada did not prevent members of organized crime from openly owning and operating casinos. To some degree, Nevada needed the criminals to make gambling viable because no one else had their expertise and experience. Gambling is a natural target for criminals because of the large amounts of cash. . . Gambling operations, including card-rooms, earn large amounts of cash and present particular opportunities for skimming and money laundering. Dealer skimming of chips by palming or collusion is probably the greatest risk. Skimming has been a significant problem. Money laundering is another problem. Bettors can come in with a large amount of cash and purchase chips. The chips can then be cashed in, labeled as 'winnings,' and the money is now legal."

PAUL: Brother Ghaffar, we are out of time. . . Any closing thoughts before you give out the Mosque contact info?

Ghaffar: Paul, the purpose of these shows is not to beat people up over their vices or bad habits, but to show that there is a way out of these evils – and that way is Islam.