



## WHAT IS BINGO?

Basically, BINGO is a game of chance that is on actual cards or electronic cards. The card has the word BINGO on the top and columns beneath each letter with random numbers in five spaces. Each card has some of the same numbers, but also has different numbers on it as well. However, the center all of the cards has a "free space." There is a container located up front in the room which contains all of the numbers possible for the game (each one of the numbers and a letter written on a tiny ball). There is a person in charge of the game who "calls" the game near the container up front. To play the game, one at a time, a ball with a letter and a number is called out. If a person with a card has the corresponding match to that number, the person then blocks out that matching square. For a basic game to be won, a row of five numbers and letters must be covered vertically, horizontally or diagonally. The row might include the "free space." When a person completes a row of five, they shout out "BINGO." The goal of the game is to be the first one to get 5 random numbers called. Once the row of numbers is verified by the caller as correct, this person is then considered the winner of that game. A prize is usually awarded. Then, a new game begins.

## VARIATIONS OF BINGO

There are many variations of the game of BINGO that can be played to vary the variety of play. For example, to win a game, the person may need to win just the four corners of the card. This requires a longer period of calling out numbers as it involves the 'B' column and 'O' column to win. Another favorite game is called the

"blackout." In "blackout," the numbers are called until the first person has covered every number on their card including the "free space" and shouts out "BINGO!" Again the numbers are verified as being called out, and if they are all accurate, the person is declared a winner.

## HOW COULD BINGO HAVE ANY RELATIONSHIP TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS?

In the game of bingo, (especially in the version called "blackout") the goal is to get each number on your card called out first, and be declared the winner to get a reward. Likewise, in many religions, there are rules to follow and things that must be done to earn their way to their reward. The focus is on the human being DOING things, or activities or having attitudes that gains them a special place in their version of eternity. This system of salvation, through works, satisfies many people as it gives them a feeling of satisfaction that they have done their part to secure a place in their eternity.

But, in True Christianity, the goal of the BINGO game would be totally different. The game would be won as soon as the person received their card as it is only the "FREE" space that was important to play the game. No numbers would need to be called to fill up the columns or the corners or play for a blackout. In True Christianity, Jesus' death on the Cross as a substitution for each one of us is our "FREE SPACE." We win our eternal reward by his sacrifice. And, His gift to us is FREE.

## IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

This concept of gaining eternity with God, or going to Heaven to be with God by using the "FREE SPACE" sounds too good to be true to most people. It sounds too radical to be real. Well, the way of salvation that Jesus preached while He was here on earth sounded radical back then as well. It was so different, that many people throughout time and, even today find it difficult to accept. They tend to resist the idea that GRACE (God's Redemptive Action Concerning Earth) would be free. They still want to earn their way into eternity. In essence, instead of winning their game using the "FREE" space, they want to keep playing and win by their own actions up to and including playing a sort of spiritual "Blackout" game, when what is required is winning by receiving a card with just the "FREE" space being used or by what is known as *salvation by Grace through faith*.

## IS GRACE REALLY FREE AND EASY?

That is a good question. The answer is Yes and No. Yes, the Bible does say that salvation is by grace, which is free. Winning/gaining our salvation through what Jesus did, rather than what we do, is easy. But, Jesus did pay a terrible price by His beatings, and grueling walk up the Via Dolorosa (The Way of Sorrows) and His death on the Cross at Calvary. His death *paid our penalty for our sins*. So, our reconciliation to God was free and easy (simple) as we thank Jesus for the sacrifice He made on our part.