

Authentic Christianity  
**Playing God**  
James 4:13-17

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HDBC

**The Bible** offers many marks of an authentic Christian. Love for God. Love for one another. Repentance from Sin. Humility. Devotion to God's glory. Consistency in prayer. Spiritual growth toward maturity. Obedience to God's word. But nothing more clearly marks an authentic believer than a desire and determination to do the will of God.

**Psalm 40:8** David wrote, *I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.*

**Psalm 143:10** he added, *Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.*

**Jesus taught**, *whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.*

**Jesus also said**, *Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.*

**For James**, as it was for David and Jesus, doing the will of God was a clear sign of authentic Christianity. That is what he affirms in our passage.

**Read James 4:13-17**

**There is a game** that many people play. For the most part they do not even realize they are playing this game. I'm referring to **Playing God**. It's more than a game, it is a role that some people embrace.

**The objective** of the game is to imagine that we are the final authority in our own lives—that we can live anyway that we choose. In order to play the game you have to keep God locked away in a very restricted room of your life. You open that room on Sundays or whenever what you need seems much bigger than what you can provide. Other than Sundays, God is usually only let out of the room when a crisis happens. Then, suddenly God's favor is requested and His action is expected. **He is more like a genie in a bottle than like a master on a throne.**

**What I have just described** is not authentic Christianity. That is only a façade or what it really means to follow Christ. There is no room to play God for those who want to be authentic believers. So, let's take a look at the game.

## 1. Rules for Playing God (13, 16)

### 1) Selfish Planning (13)

Making plans without consulting the Lord.

**James addresses** those who make plans for next year's calendar without any consultation with the Lord or acknowledgment that He is in charge. This person plans as if there is no God. No thought of Him. No possibility that God may have other plans.

Not only has this guy planned his year without the Lord, but he is **already counting the profits** which will come his way.

**Notice also** that he has planned for an entire year. It seems to imply that his plans are inflexible. These plans are clearly born in the heart and mind of the man and not of the Lord. So, the first rule of Playing God is selfish planning. We see what this looks like in verse 13

*Set your own schedule – today or tomorrow*

*Select your own path – we will go to such and such city*

*Determine your own time table – and spend a year there*

*Decide your own activities – and engage in business*

*Predict your own outcome – and make a profit.*

**This is** in essence, practical atheism. If you are one who does all the planning for the future without consulting the Lord, then you are a practical atheist. You do believe in the existence of God, you just don't live like it.

The first rule of **Playing God** is selfish planning. The second rule is . .

### 2) Arrogant Boasting (16)

Not only do some believers leave God out of their plans, but some are **leaving him out of their successes**. Whenever things are going well, not giving God the credit or admitting all that He has done for us.

These are people who do their own thing, without God, and become very arrogant in their boasting.

People will boast about just about everything. It is in our nature to boast. We boast of the accomplishments of our kids. Fish we catch. Sports team we cheer for. Even gas mileage that we get.

The owner of a new car had begun to irritate his friends by bragging about his gas mileage. So they decided on a way to have some fun out of his tireless boasting, as well as bring it to an end.

Every day one of them would sneak into the parking lot where the man kept his car and pour a few gallons of gas into the tank. Soon the braggart was recording absolutely phenomenal mileage. He was boasting of getting as much as 90 miles per gallon, and the friends took secret delight in his exasperation as he tried to convince people of the truthfulness of his claims. It was even more fun to watch his reaction when they stopped refilling the tank. The poor fellow couldn't figure out what had happened to his car.

We are ***playing God*** when we boast of our accomplishments. The boasting that comes with playing God is not simply wrong, it is evil.

## 2. The Problems with Playing God (14, 16)

There are two problems that James wants us to consider when we are tempted to play God.

### 1) You don't know what the future holds (14A)

Though we have a pretty good idea about tomorrow, we really cannot know with certainty what it will be like when it gets here.

**Life can offer** some amazing surprises. Things don't always turn out the way we think. In fact they seldom turn out the way we think. Someone said . . . *Life is what happens to you while you are making other plans.*

**The people** whom James is describing are planning for a year with a rigid certainty. But the Bible makes it clear that we cannot know what tomorrow holds. Life is uncertain. *Every divorce is a change in plans.*

Every disease is an alteration in plans. Every death is an interruption in plans.

Think about the plans that you made in late 2019 for 2020. Vacations, weddings, celebrations, educational plans, business plans. No one could have predicted what 2020-21 have actually become.

## 2) **You don't know how long your life will be (14B)**

The second problem with playing God is that the length of one's life is unpredictable and almost always shorter than anticipated. The one who is playing God is living his life as if it will never end. But James reminds us that our lives are but a vapor. Like an early morning fog that will quickly dissipate.

**Step outside into** the frigid air and watch what happens when you exhale. Your warm breath forms a small puff of white vapor that lingers for a second, then vanishes. That's your life.

Sparklers on New Year's Eve. Matches that are lit.

***Seize the moment. Remember all those women on the Titanic who waved off the dessert cart.*** Erma Bombeck

**The Bible warns** us not to take tomorrow for granted. The shortness of life should not come as a surprise to us because we read it in God's word. We may try to lengthen our lives and still not succeed. The real need is not to try to lengthen our lives, but to use our lives to the fullest.

The one playing God thinks he doesn't have to think about death.

## 3. **The Alternative to Playing God (15, 17)**

So, what do we do about it? What is the alternative? It is to let God be God, not simply in the sense that He is God over all the universe but that He is God over my life. This involves three things. We must . . .

### 1) **Submit to the will of God (15)**

I must see my life and my future as belonging to the Lord. When I do this it will be natural then for me to subject my plans and desires to the plans and desires of the Lord. We must pray like Jesus prayed. Not my will by

yours. It involves more than simply tagging words onto the end of your prayer. It involves an attitude and orientation toward life that knows God is real and knows better than me what my plans need to be.

It means having the consciousness that God is not only real but that He is working in and through your life. **And that He has the right to slightly or severely alter our plans at any time.** So, the first step is to recognize and submit to God's will as we are making our plans.

## 2) Know the will of God

Note the first phrase. The one who knows the will of God. This does not refer to one who passively stumbles into the will of God, almost by accident, but one who aggressively seeks to know the will of God. It is our responsibility to put ourselves in a position to know the will of God.

Intentional time in the Word.

Intentional time in prayer.

Intentional time in worship and fellowship with other believers.

Intentional awareness of the needs of others.

Intentional understanding of our culture and how the kingdom impacts it.

## 3) Do the will of God (17)

The third step is to make every effort to do God's will. Many people talk about praying about a situation, but already have in their minds what they want to do. They claim that they are yielding to the will of God, but are actually doing their own will.

James reminds us that we will not be held accountable for what we know, but **for what we do** with what we know.

If you know the right thing to do, then you better do it. If you do not, then you are a practical atheist. You say you believe in God, and you do. But you live as if you do not.

Are you playing God? It will be evident as you think through the rules of the game, the problems with the game and the alternative to the game.

D. L. Moody once said . . .

*Our great problem is the problem of trafficking in un-lived truth.*

We know the truth but don't live it.

Have you slipped outside of the absolute lordship of Christ over every part of your life? If so, that must be changed!

If you are the one calling the shots for your life, making your own plans, cutting your own path, determining your own future, that must stop

What decisions have you made lately without consulting God's will?

What decisions will you make in the future? Will you set them before God and seek His will?

I want us to close by consider the old hymn, ***Have Thine Own Way, Lord***

Would you join me in saying this words quietly with me? More than that, as you say the words, would you let them be your prayer?

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!

Thou art the potter; I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after Thy will.

While I am waiting, yielded and still.