

James 4:11-17

2-24-21

Games People Play

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

A. Slide2,3 This Sunday: **Pantry Drive** (toothpaste / toothbrushes). **Blood Drive** from 8-12 (make apt.). **Missions prayer** 6:30pm in Agape Room, guest *Sophie Danielson*.

II. Slide4 **Intro:** flannel Jason. *Games People Play*

A. Out of my 6 other siblings, I played the most with my 2 younger sisters as a child. We would “drive up” on our big wheels or tricycles & play gas station.

We even lined up *little benches* & played church. What do you remember playing?

1. Another game we **all** learned to play, *from a very young age*, was learning how to play God ... w/others & even ourselves.

B. In **1964** a best selling book was, *Games People Play* (The Psychology of Human Relationships)

1. It was about subtle ways people **manipulate** others w/o them even being aware.

2. A book, *Games Christians Play*, came out in **1967**. Taking readers behind the scenes in the Christian community, to reveal games played ***beneath a religious veneer***.

a) We as Christians play games like: The, *I know more than you do game*, or, *When you have been a Christian for as long as I have, as if they were born in a choir loft* or saved at age2?

C. James introduces us to the most widely played game among Christians **then/now...**

1. Slide5 **Playing God w/Others** (11,12) & **Playing God w/Yourself** (13-17).

D. Note also, these 2 mini-sections, both are **a sin of speech**. **Do not speak evil against one another brothers/sisters**. And, **come now you who say**.

III. Slide6a **PLAYING GOD WITH OTHERS (11,12) Read all**

A. James command is, *Do not speak evil against, do not defame or do not denigrate*.

1. A defamatory word may be perfectly **true**: we **do not** have to tell lies in order to **defame**. **But** the fact that it is **true** *gives us no right to say it*.
 2. True or false, it **makes us superior**, we *talk down* to them, ourselves adopting a *superior position*.
 3. Defamation is forbidden **not** as a *breach of truth*, **nor** even as a *breach of love*, **but** as a *breach of humility*. (10)
 - a) **If** we are *really low before God* (6-10), we have *no altitude left* from which to *talk down* to anyone. *Alec Motyer, The Message of James.*
- B. **So to play this game**, here's its 1st objective: Imagine yourself as *superior* to other Christians **& put them down** in various ways.
- C. **Slide6b Rule 1:** You must *speak evil* of your brother or sister. (11a)
1. Learn how to **talk down to** people. **Use harsh words** about the person **who is absent**. **Talk about** 1 person, to another person, w/the goal of *lowering your listener's estimate* of that other person. **And**, neatly wrap your conversations in a *thin-phony-veneer* of "*Perhaps I shouldn't share this but...*" **or**, "*I don't mean to be critical but...*" **or**, "*we need to pray for so-n-so.*"
- D. **Slide6c Rule 2:** You must *judge* your brother or sister. (11b)
1. **Judge** - to pronounce condemnation upon someone.
 2. In order to judge someone *rightly* though, we must know **ALL** there is to know about that other person.
 - a) It requires the *complete understanding* about that person's **thoughts & motives** ... that only **God** possesses.
 - b) **Jesus cautioned about hypocritical judgment** in Mt.7:1-5 (splinter/plank)
 - (1) If you see someone else *doing wrong* ask yourself whether *the same evil in another form* is hiding inside **you** somewhere.
 3. **The law** James is probably referring to was *the royal law* he already mentioned in **2:8**, *love your neighbor as self*. Will you set yourself above this law?

E. **Slide6d 2 Reasons** why *not* to play this game.

F. **Reason 1:** It places **us** in a position of authority reserved for **God alone**. (12a)

1. It is highly probable we **don't** have *all the information on our friend*, **thus** we could very well be *mistaken, partial, misled!* Only **God** knows the deepest facts.

G. **Reason 2:** Playing God ignores or excuses our own failures. (12a)

1. “One of the easiest ways to *hide our sins* is to *expose the sins of others*.”

H. **Who are you to judge another?** (12b)

1. Original, the personal pronoun **you** is placed 1st in the sentence, “*You there! Who are you...?*”
 - a) This turns the spotlight away from *others* & puts it full force on **us**.

IV. **Slide7a PLAYING GOD WITH YOURSELF (13-17)** *sin of presumption*

A. (13) Our lives are completely in **God's** hands. *Therefore*, we must live trusting **Him** for every moment.

1. Imagine for a moment **you** as the final authority over your life, **then** live like it. Take **God** completely out of the picture, **don't** depend on Him, **don't** even recognize His existence. *It sounds like this ...*
 - a) Choose your own **time & schedule**. (13a) *today or tomorrow*.
 - b) Choose your **location**. (13b) *we will go to such and such a town*.
 - c) Choose how much **time** there. (13c) *spend a year there*.
 - d) Choose your own activities around your own **benefits & pleasures** (13d) *& trade*
 - e) Choose how much you'll make in **profits**. (13e) *make a profit*.
 - f) Choose to **boast** about it. (16) *you boast in your arrogance*.

B. James **isn't** coming against *day planners*, **or** advocating haphazard organization.

1. God condones wise planning. Prov.16:9 **The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.**
2. *But* are plans are always to be according to **His will**, acknowledging **His sovereignty** in our lives.

C. Slide7b **3 Reasons** why we'll *never* win at **Playing God** (14)

D. **Reason 1:** Tomorrow's circumstances are totally **uncertain**. (14a) *you do not know what tomorrow will bring.*

1. An *unexpected injury, sudden death of a spouse, loss of a job*, can instantly change everything. [Life is so transient & brief]
2. **Wanna make the best of it then?** Ask the divine Spirit to *choose for you & guide you*. **Discover God's will & do it.** [Find out *where God is moving* & move w/Him]

E. Slide7c **Reason 2:** We have no assurance of a long life. (14b) *What is your life? For you are a **mist**/steam/smoke that appears for a little time and then **vanishes**.* (the transience of life)

1. Slide8 Wasn't this the problem of **the Rich Fool** in Lk.12:1-20? *Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all **my crops**.' 18 Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down **my barns** and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all **my wheat and other goods**. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, "**My friend**, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!" '20 "But God said to him, '**You fool!** You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' 21 "Yes, a person is a **fool** to store up earthly wealth **but not have a rich relationship with God.**"*
 - a) He doesn't criticize the man for **being rich, for saving, or for planning**.
 - b) He thought about *his bounty, his barns, his goods*. *My crops, my barns, my wheat, my goods, my friend/soul*. He was a little *my-opic!*
 - c) He didn't recognize **God** as the real owner. Deut.8:18 **Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful.**

d) He was a pleasure seeker who lived only for material things. When we ask, *how much is one worth*, we should be talking about one's **character & not** one's *possessions*.

e) He was called a fool because he left God out of his life. Have you left God out of your finances, decisions, life, *in some area*?

(1) Then Like a crack of thunder God said to him, ***You Fool!***

f) He missed the true meaning of life by giving himself wholly to getting & spending.

(1) *A ship should be in water, not water in the ship.* And so with possessions...***we should possess them but not let them possess us.***

F. **Slide9 Reason 3:** We have no right to ignore God's will. (15) *Instead you ought to say, **If the Lord wills**, we will live and do this or that.* [the heart of the matter]

G. **Slide10a** The Puritans loved the phrase ***Deo Volente*** - *God willing*. (signing letters w/**D.V.** became a common practice)

1. It's not that the Bible condemns *forward planning*, **but** it's simply that we should never leave God out of our future plans.

2. The mere use of the phrase *God willing* itself can become a ***pious cliché*** – perhaps that's why it has largely disappeared – **but the attitude of *humble dependence on God* as we face an uncertain future is the vital thing to retain.** [don't have to say all the times, *please pass the potatoes*, D.V.]

3. Back in the OT, King David wrote ***My times are in your hand, Lord.*** Ps.31:15

a) **Slide10b** In simple terms, *whatever I put in my day planner for 2021, will be of no significance compared to what **God** puts in my day planner.*

b) When we recover the attitude of ***Deo Volente***, **then** we will be able to echo the prayer attributed to Moses in Psalm 90, ***So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.***

4. **D.V.** - *God willing* - before and after everything in life, presupposes ***a life of dependent prayer in which all is taken before God.***

5. Slide10c *God willing - is the posture of a burning heart.*

H. Prayer: God teach us to be humble and *plan in Pencil!* *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In my heart as it is in heaven.*

I. Keywords: Games, playing God, humility, judge, speak evil, rich fool, Des Volente, God willing.