James 4:11-17

“Games People Play!”

I. INTRO:
A. Oh the Games People Play (best selling book 1964; The Psychology of Human Relationships)!
   1. It was about subtle ways people manipulate others, w/o them even aware.
      a) [Oh yes, in 1968, there was a Joe South song by that name]
   3. We as Christians play games like: The, I know more than you do game…
      “When you have been a Christian as long as I have…” (like they were born in a choir loft? - or, saved at age2?)

B. James introduces us to the most widely played game among Christians then/now...
   1. Playing God w/Others (11,12) & Playing God w/Yourself (13-17).
   2. As Satan manipulated Adam & Eve into playing his rebellion game, all of us have been born w/a natural passion for wanting to be God in our own lives & in the lives of others.¹

II. GAMES PEOPLE PLAY!
A. “PLAYING GOD” WITH OTHERS! (11-12)
B. Here’s this 1st games objective: Imagine yourself as superior to other Christians, & put them down in various ways!
C. Rule #1: You must speak evil of your brother or sister. (11a)
   1. Speak evil - to talk against, to defame, “to talk down”.
   2. It usually applied to harsh words about the person who is absent.
   3. It’s the idea of talking about 1 person, to another person, w/the goal of lowering your listener’s estimate of that 3rd person.
      a) So they’re not around to defend themselves; & little concern w/accuracy.
      b) And it’s neatly wrapped 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. Rule #2: You must judge your brother or sister. (11b)
   1. Judge - to pronounce condemnation upon someone.

¹ Charles Swindoll; James.
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 *(splitter/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*.”
   a) Will you set yourself above this law? Or, declare it’s a bad law?

E. **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*.

I. **“PLAYING GOD” WITH YOURSELF** (13-17)

J. (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.
   2. Take God completely out of the picture; *don’t* depend on Him; *don’t* even recognize His existence.

K. **Rule #1:** Choose your own *time & schedule.* (13a) [Today or tomorrow]
L. **Rule #2:** Choose your *location.* (13b) [we will go to such and such a city]
M. **Rule #3:** Choose how much *time* there. (13c) [spend a year there]
N. **Rule #4:** Choose your own activities around your own *benefits & pleasures* (13d)[trade]
O. **Rule #5:** Choose how much you’ll make in *profits.* (13e) [make a profit]
P. **Rule #6:** Choose to *boast* about it. (16) [now you boast in your arrogance]
Q. James isn’t coming against day planners, or advocating haphazard organization!

1. God condones wise planning.
2. Prov. 16:9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.
3. Eph. 5:15, 16 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
4. But are plans are always to be according to His will, acknowledging His sovereignty in our lives!

R. 3 Reasons why we’ll never win at Playing God! (14)

S. Reason #1: Tomorrow’s circumstances are totally uncertain. (14a) [You do not know what will happen tomorrow]

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.
   a) Find out where God is moving & move w/Him!

T. Reason #2: We have no assurance of a long life. (14b) [For what is your life? It’s even a vapor that appears for a little time & then vanishes away]

1. Vapor (ἀτμίς atmis) - steam, smoke. (steam from a kettle; or smoke which the wind carried away & graphically depicts the transience of life)
2. Vanishes - to make to disappear.
   a) Aristotle used the word of the migration of birds.
3. Like Moses’ Psalm in Ps.90 (esp.3-6).

U. 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]

V. What is the Christians greatest sin against God today?

1. Explain difference of sins of Commission (we know what not to do & we do it anyways) & Omission (we know what to do & we choose not to do it).
2. This is why I’m always getting on us for knowing so much & doing so little.

W. We are in so much trouble! - What do we do with this info?

1. 30,000 children die every day of hunger & preventable disease.
   a) 13 million people die every year from infectious & parasite diseases… we know how to prevent!
2. 1.2 billion of our neighbors live in absolute poverty. ($1 or less, a day) Thats more than population of U.S., Canada, & the whole European Union combined!
1.6 billion are very poor ($2 or less, a day)

b) So, 2.8 billion [That's almost 1/2 our world going to bed hungry every night]

3. Over 1 billion people have no access to improved drinking water.

4. Lack of **Vitamin A** kills a million **infants** a year.

5. **Iron deficiency** is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated **2 billion** people.

6. **Iodine deficiency** is the greatest single cause of mental retardation & brain damage. This effects **1.9 billion** people. Can be easily prevented by adding iodine to salt.

7. **Human trafficking:** $32 billion yr business. 3rd largest after drugs & weapons
   a) Children exploited in sex trade every year? **2 million.**

8. 100,000 live **enslaved** in the U.S. presently
   a) 17,500 new victims trafficked across our boarders each yr.
   b) Another 30,000 pass thru on their way to other International destinations.
   c) 27 million slaves in the world (50% are children)

9. **Children soldiers:** 300,000. 50 countries recruit children under 18; young as age 7

X. Q: What difference would it make to your life if you took seriously the definition of sin in verse.17? (trafficking)

1. "In the end we will not remember the words of our **enemies**, but the silence of our **friends**." Martin Luther King

Y. May our prayer be...“Thy will be done, in me as in Heaven!”