“How To Quit Playing God”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 11 of 15 – March 17, 2013 at SBC

James 4:11-12

Back in the 1960's, there was a famous book, written by Eric Burns, called “Games People Play”. A couple of years later, another book came out, . . . “Games Christians Play”. It was an interesting book, that dealt with games, . . . Christians play, in the name of the Lord. Today, we’re going to look at, . . the deadliest game -- the game, . . . of playing God.

James 4:11-12 – *"Brothers, do not slander, one another. Anyone, who speaks against his brother, or judges him, speaks against the law, and judges it.* [When you judge the Law, you're not keeping it, but, sitting in judgment on it] v. 12 – *There is only one Lawgiver, and Judge,* [God] *the One, who is able, to save, and destroy. But, you -- who are you, to judge, your neighbor?"*

James says, that the way we play God, is by **judging, other people**. Anytime, I judge you, anytime, you judge me, we're playing God. It's only, God's responsibility, to judge, other people. **I. Why do we judge others?**

Let’s look, . . . at Why, we judge, other people, . . . Why shouldn't we judge, . . . When is it wrong, . . . to judge other people, . . . and, How do you break the habit, of judging other people. You'll be a lot happier, if you learn how, . . . to deal with, this issue.

Romans 2:3 – *"So, when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them, and yet, do the same thing, do you think, you will escape, God's judgment?"* Paul says, that one of the reasons, . . . we tend to judge other people, is to . . . **1) . . . excuse, our own faults**.

You think, . . by pointing the finger, at somebody else, . . . God is going to forget, what you've done, . . or, when you point out, how somebody else has fallen, then, you don't look so bad. We use it, as an excuse, . . . to blame others. We love to, accuse others, . . . and, excuse ourselves.

How do we, do that? How do we, excuse our sins? We do that, by relabeling them, . . . "I'm not a gossip, I'm just, sharing a concern," "I'm not negative, I'm realistic," "I'm not unreliable, I'm flexible." We have, different terminology. We excuse our sins, by relabeling them. "I'm not critical, I'm discerning." We all, do that.

There’s another reason, he says, why we tend to judge other people, that's because, **2) it appeals, to our pride**. Proverbs 26:22 – *"Gossip is, so tasty. How we love, to swallow it."* It's like we eat it, . . . with great relish. Why is it, when somebody is gossiping, . . . usually, we are all ears? We just can't wait, to hear, what's being said. Why? There is a natural, innate ability, of gossip, or slander, to capture, our curiosity.

This is the sin, . . . the sin, of judging other people, . . that, the Bible says, you'll have to deal with, more in your Christian life, . . . than almost, any other sin. It's a self-righteous attitude, of putting other people down, being critical, being judgmental. Jesus condemned it, . . . more, than almost, . . any other sin. The Bible, talks about it. You can find it, universally. Everybody, . . . has this problem. It comes, . . . naturally. Usually, when slander, is being told, . . . we're all ears.

\*\*\* There are many different kinds of slander.There's slander, in the first degree -- "Do you know, . . . what that guy's, doing?" You share it -- a statement, of judgment, . . . on them.

Christians like slander, in the second degree -- "I'm sharing this with you, . . so, you can pray about it, with me." If you're not careful, a prayer chain, . . . can turn into a gossip grapevine, very quickly. When we hear about, how other people have fallen, . . . there's something inside, a little bit of pride."

The Bible teaches, that we often, tend to judge other people, . . because, we think it's going to put us, in a better position, . . . but, whenever you point a finger at somebody, . . . you're pointing three fingers, . . . back at yourself. The Bible says, . . . what we sow, we're going to reap.

Suppose one person, is twenty million dollars in debt, and, you're only, ten million dollars in debt. Just because, someone else, is more in debt, than you are, does that lessen, your debt? No. But, we think, that's true. The Bible says, we tend to judge others, first, to excuse our own errors, . . . and, then, also, we have the natural ability, to eat it up, . . . because, it appeals to our pride, it makes us feel good, it gives us, an ego boost.

II. WHY SHOULD I NOT JUDGE OTHERS.James gives us 3 reasons, why we shouldn't judge, other people:

**1. It's unchristian**. James 4:11 – *"Brothers, do not slander, one another, . . anyone, who speaks against his brother, or judges him, speaks against, the law."* Actually, when it says "judges him", . . . it mentions the word, "brother", again. "Brother", is used three times, in this passage. Why? In the first place, we shouldn't judge one another, . . . because, we're all part, of the same family. We're, . . . brothers.

When I see another Christian stumble, . . . or, fall, or have a tough time, I shouldn't rejoice in that, . . . because, they're family. I should be concerned, about it. I think a lot of times, . . . we get a little bit of glee, out of it.

I heard about a guy, who came to a pastor, one time, and said, "I don't have, but, one talent." The pastor asked, "What's, your talent?" The man said, "I have the gift, of criticism." The gift of criticism, does not come, from the Holy Spirit, . . . but, from the devil. The pastor was wise, and thought about the parable, in the Bible, and said, "The guy who had only one talent, went out and buried it. Maybe, that's what you ought to do, with yours."

Notice it says, *"Brothers, do not slander, . . ."* The word "slander", and, the word "devil", . . are the same word. The word "devil", means slander. The Bible calls Satan, . . the accuser of Christians. He's the slanderer, of Christians. What does, this mean?

The devil's number one activity, is going around, and putting people down, to slander them, and put them down, malign them. We are most like the devil, . . . when we slander. When we speak against, somebody else, (including all kinds of criticism, maligning, judging) we're doing, the devil's work, for him. That's what, the devil's job description, is. John 8:44 says, *"The devil, is the father of lies."* Revelation says, he's the . . . "accuser of brothers." It's unchristian, . . . to judge, other people.

**2. It's unloving**. We shouldn't judge others, because, it's unloving. *". . . who judges, speaks against, the Law, . . ."* Is it, illegal? Is there a law, against judging, in the United States? He's talking about, . . . the Royal Law. *"Whenever, I judge you, I'm breaking, the Law."* What law, is it, I'm breaking? He's mentioned it, earlier.

He mentions it, . . . two or three times, in the book. James 2:8 – *"If you really keep, the Royal Law, found in Scripture, . . . love your neighbor, as yourself."* James says, if you do this, . . . you're doing right. When I judge you, I'm breaking, the Royal Law -- the law of love -- *"Love your neighbor, . . . as yourself."*

We say, "It's just words, and people will, forget them." People don't, . . . forget words. You always, remember them. It's unchristian, . . . and, unloving.

**3. It's unjustified**. Romans 4:12 – *"There's only, one lawgiver, and one judge."* The word "lawgiver", is used six times, in the Old Testament, . . . and, only once, in the New Testament. The six times, in the Old Testament, . . . it refers, to God.

The same thing here -- it's referring, to God. Only God, . . has the right, to judge. It's in, God's job description. It's not, in your job description, . . to judge people. He has not, commissioned you, to talk to everybody, . . . about everybody else.

One of the greatest, weaknesses in people, is we tend to generalize people, . . by just, one mistake. If they make one mistake, . . . we write off their, whole personality. If a guy, makes a foolish mistake, we say, . . . "He's a fool." Not, necessarily. Maybe, he just made a foolish mistake, . . . in one particular area.

We tend to judge, in other people, . . . things we dislike, in ourselves. Psychologists have known that, for a long time. When you see someone, who reacts violently, to a particular sin, . . usually, in their heart, it means they have a hang up, with it. It doesn't mean, they're involved in it. It might just mean, they have a fear, that, they will be involved in it. We always, tend to react, to our weaknesses, in others. What we see, is usually, . . . just, a mirror of ourselves.

III. WHEN IS IT WRONG TO JUDGE OTHERS? There are seven places, in Scripture, where it says, . . . it is wrong, to judge. The Scripture does say, . . in some places, . . . that, we are to judge, certain things. We're to judge ourselves, . . . and, we're to judge, certain matters. But, there's seven times, it says, . . don't judge, others:

1. Romans 2:1-3 – *"You therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment, on someone else. For at whatever point, you judge others, you're condemning yourself, for you who pass judgment, do the same thing. Now, we know that God's judgment, on those who do such things, is based on truth, so when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them, and yet, you do the same thing, do you think, you'll escape, God's judgment?"*

1. The time, when **it's wrong, to judge other people, . . . is when, I'm practicing, the same sin.** I don't have, any right, to speak up, . . . if I lack, the personal integrity, . . . I'm guilty too.

Remember, the woman, caught, in adultery? What did Jesus say, to the Pharisees? *"He who is without sin, cast the first stone."* They all, . . . walked away. That's what God, . . . is saying here. I don't have, any right, . . . to judge anyone else, . . . if I'm guilty, of the same thing. We need to, . . . be consistent.

2. Matthew 7:3-5 – *"Why do you look, at the speck of sawdust, in your brother's eye, and pay no attention, to the plank, in your own eye? How can you say, to your brother `Let me take the speck, out of your eye' when there's a plank, in your own eye. You hypocrite! First, take the plank, out of your own eye, and then, you can see clearly, to remove the speck, in your brother's eye."* Jesus, is talking here, in His famous, . . . Sermon on the Mount.

This is a good example, of the fact, . . . that Jesus, told jokes. Hebrew humor, is humor, by exaggeration. If you read through, the Sermon on the Mount, it has a number of laugh lines in it, this being one of them. He said this, in exaggeration, . . . and, I'm sure the disciples, got a big laugh.

Imagine two guys: one guy has got some sawdust in his eye, and the other has a telephone pole, hanging out of his eye. Later on, He says, “Just imagine: it's easier, for a camel, to go through an eye of a needle, than somebody, with a lot of money, to make it into heaven, just on his own money.” That's Hebrew humor - - humor, by exaggeration. Jesus is making a point here, . . . with humor.

He's saying, . . . **2) it's wrong to judge, when it blinds me, to my own faults**.If judging you, causes me, to not look at myself, realistically, . . . then, it's wrong. We are great speck analyzers, . . . nitpicking specks, when we have a logjam, . . . in our own eye.

The inevitable result, of being a judgmental person, is in James 4:2 – *"In the same way, you judge others, you'll be judged."* If you are critical, to other people, . . . you'll be, criticized. So, it's wrong, . . . when you practice, . . . the same sin. It's wrong, when it blinds you, . . . to your own faults.

3. John 7:24, gives us the third time, in scripture, when it's wrong, to judge other people. *"Jesus says, `Stop judging, by mere appearance, and make a right judgment.'"* **3) It's wrong, to judge others, . . . when you draw conclusions, . . . based on, outward appearance.**

We tend, to make our impression, of people, . . in about the first 15 seconds, and most of that, is in the way, that they look. We judge people, we size them up. Their face, clothing, hairdo. If you judge, . . . just, on the basis of appearance, . . . that's, unwise.

In I Samuel 16:7, Samuel said this, when he chose David, . . the runt of the family, to be king of Israel. Others, were saying, "Not David! That scrawny kid! He's nothing. The other brothers, . . . are the sharp ones!" Samuel said, "God doesn't look, at the appearance. God looks at, . . . the heart."

4. John 7:51 – *"Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier, and who was one of their own number, asked* (talking to the Sanhedrin) *`Does our law, condemn a man, without first hearing him, to find out, what he is doing?'"* That's a, rhetorical question. The obvious answer, . . . is "no".

**It's wrong, to judge, when you, . . . 4) condemn somebody, . . . before, you hear the facts.** It is unwise, to make a judgment about somebody, . . . before you know, all the facts.

If you study scripture, you'll find, that even if your conclusions, are right, about that person, you're still wrong – because, you did it, . . . without getting the facts. There is always, more than one side, to a story. There are three sides, . . . to a story: your side, their side, . . . God's side. Usually, we have partial truth.

5. Colossians 2:16 – *"Therefore, do not let anyone, judge you, by what you eat, drink, or regard, to religious festivals, a new moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow, . . . of the things to come. Reality, however, is found, in Christ."* Paul is saying, it is wrong, to judge people, their spirituality, . . . on, **5) the basis of externals, religious observances**.

You can't tell, a person's walk with God, . . . based on their outward, external observances -- by what you eat, or drink, or how they worship. These are just a shadow, of the things to come. Reality, is found, in Christ. When we judge somebody, on the basis of their outward, religious observances, we’re missing the point.

This is what, Romans 14, . . . is all about. They had a church, where some people, were judging each other, . . . because, they looked at certain habits, and said, "You couldn't be a Christian, and do that!" Many times, people say, "Can I be a Christian, and, . . . ?", . . . and, then, they name, their pet habit.

It's like, "How close to the cliff, can I get, and not fall off?", . . . or, "How close to the fire, can I get, and not get burned." "Can I do this, and still, call myself, a believer?" Paul says, this is what, is happening. You're judging each other, . . . and, calling each other, weak or strong. You're fighting, . . . back and forth.

Put, the other person, first. It's wrong, when we judge people, on the basis, of external observances. Christians disagree, . . . on many, different things.

6. James 4:11 – *"Brothers, do not slander, one another. Anyone, who speaks against his brother, or judges him, speaks against the law, and judges it."*  If I judge you, and the law, has already said, “Don't do it,” I'm saying, I'm more important, than the law. I'm putting myself, above the law. I'm making myself, the law. I'm the creator, . . . and, judge, of all things.

**It's wrong, to judge, when it causes you, . . . 6) to speak evil, about another Christian.** Anything, that causes me, to speak evil, . . . about another Christian, . . . maybe, to ruin their reputation, . . . is wrong.

We are to hate wrong, . . . but, we're to love people, . . . even, when they are doing wrong.

Ephesians 4:29 says, we're always to speak, positively, . . speak only those things, that build up, and encourage. Christians, ought to be known, for their encouragement, . . . not their criticism. We don't need nagging, . . . we need encouragement. We know what's right, . . . we just, need encouragement, to do it. I would like to be known, . . . as an encourager. I think, that's what God, . . . wants us to be. Be a Barnabus!

7. I Corinthians 4:5 – *"Therefore, judge nothing, before the appointed time. Wait until, the Lord comes. He will bring to light, what is hidden in darkness, and will expose, . . . the motives, of men's hearts."*

To understand this, you have to understand, the verses, around it. What is Paul, talking about? He's talking about, motives. Everywhere Paul went, . . . his motives, were constantly, being challenged, questioned.

He is saying, **7) we have no right, to judge other people's motives, and question why, they do what they do.** He says, *"wait until, the Lord comes."* It's premature, to judge, people's motives. Why is it, premature? Nobody, really knows, . . . what's in, somebody else's, heart. You can guess, . . . but, you don't know.

To judge somebody, means we're judging, . . . **without all the facts**. Only God, has the right to judge, because, He can see, . . . in the heart. The Bible says, that someday, when the Lord comes back, *"He will bring to light, what is hidden, in darkness, and will expose, . . . the motives, of men' s heart."*

I have a hard enough time, just trying to figure out my own motives, about a lot of things, . . much less, making a good guess, . . . at yours. So, do you. A lot of times, we don't know why, . . . we do, what we do. What makes us think, we can figure out, . . . what makes other people, do what they do? We have a hard time, just judging, . . . our own selves. But, one day, it's all going to be, . . . brought to light.

You can never, judge anybody's motives, what they're doing. You don't know, . . . what's going on, in their life.

**IV. HOW DO YOU BREAK THE HABIT, . . . OF JUDGING OTHERS**

**1. Remember that I'll be judged, by the same standards, . . . that I use, to judge other people.**

If you want something, to help you, be a little more considerate, look at Matthew 7:1-2 – *"Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you, in the same way, you judge others, and he will apply to you, the same rules, you apply to others."*

The way, we judge others -- the same measure, we mete out, . . . is the same measure, we get back. If you want something, to help you break the habit, . . . of talking critically, about other people, . . . remember that. What you dish out, . . . will be dished back, to you. What you sow, . . . you're going to reap.

**2. Remember that each of us, . . . is accountable to God.**

Romans 14:12-13 – *"Every one of us, then, will have to give an account of himself, to God. So, then, let us stop judging, one another."* You're not accountable to me, in the ultimate sense, of every area, of your life.

I don't have, . . . to report to you. You don’t have, . . . to report to me. But, one day, . . . we're all going to stand before God, . . . and then, God is going to know, our motives. How's God, going to judge? He's going to judge honestly, fairly, truthfully.

It won't be, based on, . . heresy, rumors, third hand, passed down stuff, . . but, based on the facts. He will judge, impartially. In the court system, . . it seems some people, get off lighter, than others. Sometimes, it just, doesn't, . . . seem fair.

The Bible never said, . . . that, the world, would be fair. But, one day, God is going to, settle the score. Why is it, . . . that people who do all kinds of evil things, . . . get away with it, at times? Why is that? Is it fair? The Bible says, . . . that, on the other side, . . . God settles the score. One day, we'll all be judged, by the Lord, and, we'll give an account, . . . to Him.

**3. Remember how much God has been merciful to me.**

James 2:13 – *"Mercy triumphs, over judgment."*  There is a principle, greater, than criticism. It's the principle, . . . of forgiveness. The principle, . . . of mercy. Jesus said, *"Blessed are, . . . the merciful."*

Matthew 18, is the story, of the unforgiving servant. He owed $50,000, to his master. His master, forgave him. He went out, . . and, found the guy, that owed him $5, . . and, strangled the guy, . . because, he wouldn't pay him. When the master, heard about it, . . . he took the servant, and said, "If that's the way, you want to play the game, OK. You're unforgiving, it will be un-forgiven, of you." The Bible says, . . . we're to be merciful, . . . because, God has given us, . . . so much mercy.

The reason why, I have to be patient with you, . . . is because, God is patient, with me. The reason, you have to be patient with me, . . . is because God, is patient with you. That's the way it goes. None of us, . . . get, what we deserve. If we did, we wouldn't be here. It's all, . . . by God's grace.

We take advantage, of God's grace. We forget, . . . how good, it is. When you first, become a Christian, . . you understand, how much, you're forgiven. It's the most thrilling experience, . . . and, you're really grateful, for it. The longer you're a Christian, . . . the more, you take it, . . . for granted.

Kind of like the boss, . . . who gives everybody, in the company, a $350 Christmas bonus. Everybody praises, the boss. The second year, . . . he decides, to do it again -- a second $350. By the third Christmas, . . . you've already, spent the money, . . . and, thinking, “What is he going to do, this year?”

If he didn't give it, you'd be upset. We become conditioned, . . to be ungrateful. If God's been gracious with us, we need to be gracious, . . . with others. The most forgiving person, . . is the most, forgiven person.

“How To Quit Playing God”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 11 of 15

James 4:11-12

*"Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you -- who are you to judge your neighbor?"* (vs. 11b & 12)

**WE'RE PLAYING GOD WHEN WE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**I. WHY DO WE LIKE TO JUDGE OTHERS?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 2:3 – “*So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them, and yet do the same thing, do you think you will escape God's judgement?”*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 26:22 – “*Gossip is so tasty! How we love to swallow it!”*

**II. WHY SHOULD I NOT JUDGE OTHERS?**

1. It is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"Brothers do not slander ... anyone who speaks against his brother or judges his brother ... "* (vs. 11)

2. It is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"Anyone who ... judges, speaks against the law ..."* (vs. 11)

See James 2:8

3. It is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge ... who are you to judge your neighbor?* (vs. 12)

**III. WHEN IS IT WRONG TO JUDGE OTHERS?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Rom. 2:1-3)

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 7:3-5)

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (John 7:24)

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (John 7:51)

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Col. 2:16)

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (James 4:11)

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (1 Cor. 4:5)

**IV. HOW TO BREAK THE HABIT OF JUDGING OTHERS**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 7:1-2 – “*Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others.”*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 14:12-13 – “*Every one of us, then, will have to give an account of himself to God. So then, let us stop judging one another.”*

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 2:13 – “*. . . Mercy triumphs over judgement.”*

Parable of Unforgiving Servant -- Matt. 18:21-35