Faith FULL Living Part 9: How to Avoid Playing God
James 4:13—17

PPT = PowerPoint  A = animation

Open

Option 1: Ask the teens to share some of the games they loved to play as children and why they loved them.

Option 2: Play a quick game of Simon Says.

- What game are you best at playing?
- Why do we like games so much?
- What are some games that you can get hurt playing?

While physical games can be fun, sometimes we play spiritual games. (PPT 2)

- What are some of the games Christians play? (straddling the fence, gossip, lying, etc. Sins that people don’t consider “heavy.”)

Study

The most dangerous games Christians play is...

Playing God (PPT 2, A1). We can do this in two major ways:

**Playing God in the Lives of Others (PPT 3)**

James 4:11-12

11 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 are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 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?

**Problem: It’s a Fun Game (PPT4)**

It’s fun because it makes us feel like we are in control. We
control others in the way they think and act. We tell them what they ought to do, or not do.

One of the most dangerous ways we play God in the lives of others is by judging others. The biggest way we do this is by gossiping.

“Gossip is so tasty; we love to swallow it!” Prov. 18:8 (PPT , A1)

- Why do we gossip?
- How does it make you feel afterwards?
- Why is gossip judgmental?
- What are some of the ways Christians judge each other and then gossip about one another?

3 Reasons NOT to Play this Game... (PPT 4, A2)

#1 It’s UnChristian (v. 11a) (PPT 5)

- “Brothers do not slander each other.” Slandering is talking about someone in a way that will ruin their reputation, or make them look bad in the eyes of others.
- In one sense it’s a command and in another sense it’s a statement. I.E. Don’t do this. I.E. Here’s what brother’s don’t do to each other.
- How did Jesus say all men would know we are his disciples? (By our love.)
- How does slandering go directly against Jesus’ words?
- Tell about a time when you were slandered by a brother or sister in Christ.

#2 It’s Unloving (v. 11b) (PPT 6)

- What are the “greatest commands“?
- How does slander break these commands?
- Often we think that gossip just breaks the command to love our neighbor, but it also breaks the command to love God. How is this possible?

#3 It’s Unjustifiable (v. 12) (PPT 7)

- There is no time when we judge another and can claim we are helping them. Do you agree with that statement? Why? Why not?
James points out that there is ONE Lawgiver and Judge. When we begin judging others we assume His role. We play God.

Here are some passages to think about along these lines...

Matthew 7:1-2 (PPT 8)
1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

• Would you like to be judge by the same standard you use against others?

Romans 14:12-13 (PPT 9)
12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

• This passage shows that we are to be on the witness stand, not sitting on the bench with the gavel.

James 2:12-13 (PPT 10)
12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

• We are called to deliver mercy, not judgment. If we want to receive mercy, we've got to extend mercy.

Playing God in Our Own Lives (PPT 11)

James 4:13-17
13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.
The Problem: It’s a Prideful Game! (PPT 13)

• Playing God in our own lives proves that we think we are in control.
• How often do you make decisions without asking God?

3 Mistakes to Avoid (PPT 13, A1)

Mistake #1 Planning without God (v. 13) (PPT 14)

• The verse lays out a good business plan...
  a) A time. “Today or tomorrow.”
  b) A place. “such and such a city.”
  c) A deadline. “spend a year there.”
  d) An outcome. “make money.”
• Is there anything “wrong” in those steps in and of themselves?
• What’s missing?
• Would it be alright to follow the same plan with God in the middle of all of it?

Solution: Include God in Your Plans (v. 15) (PT 15)

• Many people use the words, “Lord willing” as a statement connected to what they’re doing. “Lord willing we’ll get together at the ballgame tonight.” While the phrase might be used with light meaning by some, the statement has a lot of truth in it.
• In the first century Christians would sign their letters then initial it D.V. Those are the Latin letters for “Lord willing.”
• How can we include God in our plans?
• When have you included Him and things turned out much better than expected?

Mistake #2 Presuming about tomorrow (v. 14) (PPT 16)

• The truth is this: we are not guaranteed tomorrow. There is no way of knowing if we will be breathing in the morning.
• In what ways do we live as if we will live forever on this earth? What are some of the foolish risks we take? What are some of the foolish plans we make?
• James writes that our lives are like the mist. What are some other ways the Bible describes our lives? (A leaf, grass, smoke, clouds, etc)
• Does this verse mean it’s wrong to makes plans for tomorrow? Didn’t Jesus say that no one builds a house without
planning out the cost?

- Ask the class to tell about friends or family who “died too young.” How does this confirm this verse?

**Solution:** Live one day at a time. (PPT 17)

“So don’t be anxious about tomorrow...God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.” (Matthew 6:34, LB)

- How can you stay focused on living one day at a time?
- How can you make future plans and still keep the one day at a time mindset?

**Mistake #3 Putting Off Doing Good** (v. 17) (PPT 18)

- When we know what we should do and don’t do it, it’s sin. Haven’t we always focused on what we shouldn’t do? We know it’s wrong to lie, or gossip, but we’ve neglected the other side of the picture.
- What are some things you know God wants you to do? (Make a huge list)
- When you don’t do those can it really be as “big” a sin as the things we’re not supposed to do?

**Solution:** Do It Now! (PPT 18)

Prov. 3 27-28

27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"- when you now have it with you.

- Don’t wait to do good. Do it immediately.
- What are some good things you can do for your parents this week? For your friends?
- What prevents us from doing good immediately?

**Close**

Ask each student to select one of the items from the list you made above to DO this week.
THE PERILS OF PLAYING GOD

James 4:11-17

Playing God with

Problem:

3 Reasons not to play this game:

#1.  It's

#2.  It's

#3.  It's

Mt. 7:1-2
Rom. 14:12-13
James 2:13

Playing God with

Problem:

3 Mistakes to avoid

#1.  It's

#2.  It's

#3.  It's

James 2:13
Rom. 14:12-13
Mt. 7:1-2

Memory Verse:
"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." James 4:17

Solution:

#1.  It's

#2.  It's

#3.  It's

James 4:11-17
FaithFULLLiving
OPEN: In which way are you most prone to “play God”- playing God with others or playing God with your own life? How do you play the game?

DIG: Read James 4:11-12  **PLAYING GOD WITH THE LIVES OF OTHERS**
- What is slander? What is gossip? When do we cross the line from concern to gossip?
- Why is it so enjoyable to talk about other people?
- What keeps us from allowing God to be the judge? Why do we want to take his place?
- Read Matthew 7:1-6
- What kind of judgment is Jesus condemning?
- What kind does he allow (look at verse 6)?

DIG: Read James 4:13-17  **PLAYING GOD WITH OUR OWN LIVES**
- In what way is the character in these verses “playing God”?
- What kind of planning is James condemning? Is James putting down all long range planning?
- How do we incorporate the attitude in verse 15 into our lives? Is it something we say? Think? What difference would this attitude make in your planning and goal setting?
- Why is it so important for us to remember that “you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes away”? What effect should this truth have on the way you live your life?
- How does verse 17 give you additional perspective on what is sin?

REFLECT:
1. When and how have you come face to face with the pain that is caused when you or someone else you love is judged unfairly?
2. When and how have you come face to face with the truth that life is short?
3. In what way from today’s message are you most prone to “play God” and what truth do you need to embrace to fight this tendency?
   - Playing God by placing myself on the judgment seat
   - Playing God by making goals and plans as if I am in control.
   - Playing God by presuming I have tomorrow and not living each day to the fullest.
4. Take 30 seconds to reflect on how verse 17(our memory verse) is true of you. What situation comes to mind? What action will you take this week to keep from continuing in this sin?

PRAYER TIME: Pray for courage to act.

**THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE:** “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” James 4:17