

## **Play God Day**

by Jeff Strite

Genesis 3:1-3:6

This is the 2nd in our series of "holidays" in January you probably haven't heard of. This one is called the "Play God Day" and its "observed" on January 9th each year.

According to [www.cute\\_calendar.com](http://www.cute_calendar.com):

"The day encourages you to do something nice for someone to make someone's day better and brighter. On this day you don't have to perform miracles, it is enough to do something simple."

[www.daysoftheyear.com/days/play-god-day/observes](http://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/play-god-day/observes)

"The concept of Play God Day is pretty simple. What would you do if you were god for a day? If you were god how would you change the world? If you had the place of the higher being you could set right all the wrongs you see in the world - and that is the theme and purpose for this day."

Of course, that could all depend on what god you wanted to be.

One man joked: "A miffed Greek god was able to hurl thunderbolts down from Olympus and incinerate mortals. (So you might) try to shuffle your shoes on the carpet and then touch someone ... making a teeny-tiny, itty-bitty thunderbolt between your pointing finger and your victim's neck."

Now, I've got nothing against this "holiday" - any day that dedicates itself to encouraging people to "do something nice for someone else" can't be all bad. But I got to thinking about Play God Day, and I began to realize that most people don't need any encouragement "playing God." It's a natural human tendency...and the 1st shadow of that tendency shows up way back in the garden when Satan tempted Eve

Satan casually begins to put doubt in Eve's mind: "Did God REALLY say..." and then he directly accuses God of lying: "... God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God..." Genesis 3:5

And we're told that she gave in to the temptation "when (she) saw that the fruit of the tree was ... (amongst other things) desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it..." Genesis 3:6

The temptation appealed to Eve because she WANTED to become like God!!!

Now, why would Satan use this temptation to attack Eve? Because that was what tempted him when he rebelled against God. In Isaiah 14:13-15 God speaks about Lucifer

"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the

stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH.' But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit."

Now why would Satan want to be like God?

Why would he want to ascend into heaven and put their throne above God's? Well, Satan did it because he was a proud and arrogant being. He didn't like how things were being run... and he thought he could do it better. He wanted control because then he would know it was done right!!! He wanted to do things HIS WAY!

Now it's easy for us to condemn Satan for this, but we need to understand... this is the core of many of our temptations as well. We tend to want to do things OUR WAY.

And it's almost like this is hard wired into us from birth.

ILLUS: A preacher named Ray Stedman told of 2 year old grandson. He said his mother was at her wit's end - she'd tell him to eat his food and he'd refuse. But if she told him "Now don't you eat your carrots" he'd gobble them up. You know what that boy was doing? At 2 years old this little boy was declaring that he was going to do things HIS way. He learned early how to "play God."

And, just like that little boy, we often want OUR WAY.  
Why? Because we're convinced WE'RE RIGHT!!!

ILLUS: There is an old Beatles song that goes this way:  
"Try to see it my way  
Do I have to keep on talking till I can't go on?  
While you see it your way  
Run the risk of knowing that our love may soon be gone.  
We can work it out. We can work it out.

Think of what you're saying  
You can get it wrong and still you think that it's alright.  
Think of what I'm saying.  
We can work it out and get it straight, or say good night.  
We can work it out. We can work it out.

Try to see it my way  
Only time will tell if I am right or I am wrong.  
While you see it your way  
There's a chance that we may fall apart before too long  
We can work it out. We can work it out."

Now think about this: what was the song saying was the way they would “work it out?”

That’s right: the ONLY they were going to work it out was if the other person saw it THEIR way. THEY are RIGHT... and the other person was wrong.

When that happens (when we think we’re RIGHT), we tend to want our way, because that’s the ONLY way. And we end up playing God.

We’re right... the other guy is wrong.

AND if the other guy is wrong enough we want to call down the Judgment from God

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In Luke 9:53-54 we’re told

“... (Jesus and the Disciples) entered a village of the Samaritans... But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.”

Notice, James and John wanted the privilege of calling down fire.

Why? Because they wanted to play God.

Now, there’s a part of each one of us (when others are wrong enough) that would love to call down fire from heaven on their heads. But church folks are too civilized to actually want someone to burn in fiery judgment (and they’re not sure God would let them call down fire anyway) but they wouldn’t mind that other person squirming a little.

But good, religious, Sunday-go-to-meeting folks still want to bring judgment on that special someone. And they do it in the time honored fashion of other church goers in churches across the nation: they TELL OTHERS about how terrible that other person is. And when they tell others about how terrible that other person is... they PLAY GOD.

Now James 4:11-12 tells us:

“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on 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?”

How many Lawgivers and Judges are there? (ONE)

And who is that Judge? (GOD)

When people say nasty things about others... they're trying to take HIS place. You don't want to do that.

Now Jesus taught us that there is a better way to deal with folks who annoy and irritate us: you don't talk to others... you talk to the person who's offended you. In Matthew 18:15 Jesus said "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

So, if someone sins against me, what am I supposed to do?

GO TO THEM!

Do not pass "go". Do not collect \$200. DO NOT talk to your neighbors.

Go to the one who has offended you.

On the flip side, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught: "if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24

So, if I have sinned against you, what am I supposed to do?

I'm supposed to go to you!

Thus, whether you've sinned against me, or I've sinned against you, I'm supposed to go to you and make things right.

How many of you agree with Jesus on this? (everybody raised their hand).

Good, because I'm going to ask to make a vow this morning.

If you have a problem making vows, you feel compelled to do that this morning, but this is the vow I'll ask you make this morning: if you have a problem with Greg/Scott/Me/Elders/Worship team or ANYONE in this congregation you will vow to go directly to them and not to someone else. You will go and you talk directly to them and try to settle things between the two of you.

Don't play God.

Don't allow yourself to destroy others with your words.

If you haven't got the courage to talk to them directly... DON'T.

Let me go back to my original premise: the core of much of our sinfulness is this:

We want things OUR WAY. And you can tell when this particular sin controls us.

There's a particular emotion that takes over when we can't get our way.

What do we tend to do emotionally when we can't get our way? (We lose our temper).

Many people believe that they can't help themselves when they lose their temper, but that's not true. Wanting our way is the source of this sinful behavior. Having ourselves be the God in our lives is what makes us prone to anger. So, the best way to defuse your anger is to make someone else or something else more

important in your life than yourself.

ILLUS: A friend of mine was telling about how he was desperately in love with a particular girl when he was in high school. He'd do anything to please her. My friend was also a very good basketball player and loved playing every chance he got. One day, while his girlfriend was in the stands, something went wrong while he was playing basketball and he totally lost his temper. I mean he had a tantrum in front of everyone... including his girl.

Afterward his girlfriend pulled him aside and said "Don't ever do that again. If you lose your temper like that again, we're through. I won't ever go out with you again."

Now my friend needed to make a decision. He could continue doing what he'd always done - lose his temper when he didn't get his way - or he could count on never seeing his girlfriend again.

Guess what he did?

That's right - he quit losing his temper on the court... because she was more important to him than getting his way. And a couple of years later, he married her. All he had to decide was that she was more important to him than he was. Now, of course, the best way to control our temper is to make Jesus the most important thing in our lives... but we'll back to that in a moment.

Right now I want to get back to my original point: people don't need any encouragement to play God. The source of much of our sinfulness is our tendency to do just that.

But what I found interesting is: the Bible actually tells us to become "like God".

Did you know that?

Paul writes: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV

In other words, Paul sought to imitate Christ. He sought to be like Him - to be LIKE God. And he wrote that God wants US to do the same thing.

When someone started this "Play God Day" thing that's kind of what they had in mind. Their idea (as we said at the beginning of the sermon) was to encourage people "... to do something nice for someone to make someone's day better and brighter."

But you can't imitate just ANY God to get that done.

The gods of all other world religions are cold, and impersonal.

Those gods never set the example of how we should live.

By contrast, Paul writes this to us:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ

Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!" Philipians 2:3-8

Jesus is the God we can imitate.

In fact, Jesus said that was part of the reason He came:

"... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

So if you're going to Play God... you need to realize which God you're going to imitate.

Jesus Christ

That said, if you're going to play God God's way you need to understand one basic principle:

He's God, and we're not.

He's in charge and we're not.

In fact, that's one of the things you and I had to agree to in order to become Christians.

Romans 10:9 says: "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

In order to be a Christian you need to confess that Jesus is LORD. In the days of Jesus, if you called someone your Lord, it meant they owned you. They were the Master, you were the slave. Thus, if you declare that Jesus is your LORD... you're saying that means He owns you. He owns everything you have. Your car, your house, your bank account. He owns your spouse, your kids your grandkids. HE OWNS YOU!!!

That means... He's God and you're not. In Isaiah 45: 22 God says it this way "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

Once you acknowledge that He is God and you're not then you are in the position to have Him fix what is wrong in your life and heal the brokenness that sin has brought into your life.

Nothing else will truly work.

ILLUS: There's a true story about a chaplain of a European regiment in the 1800s. One day he preached a sermon on the sin of losing your temper. And the next day he was confronted by a Major who'd been in the crowd. The officer was known as a

someone who lost his temper regularly.

The major told the preacher: "I have a hasty temper, and I cannot help it, and I cannot control it. It is impossible."

The next Sunday, the chaplain got up before the assembled troops and preached on self-deception... and the excuses which men make.

He said: "Why, a man will declare that it is impossible for him to control his temper, when he very well knows that, were the same provocation to happen in the presence of his sovereign, he not only could, but would control himself. And yet he dares to say that the continual presence of the King of Kings imposes upon him neither restraint nor fear!"

The next day, the Major approached the preacher again and said: "You were right yesterday. Hereafter, whenever you see me in danger of falling, remind me of the King."

The point is this: it's only when we surrender our will to that of Christ that we have any hope of conquering the sinful tendency we have to "play God" in our lives. It's only when Jesus is THE most important thing in our lives that we step down from the throne in our hearts and make Him our King that our lives will be right before God.

INVITATION