

"Humble yourselves, therefore,
under the mighty hand of God so
that at the proper time he may
exalt you,"

1 Peter 5:6 (ESV)



November 20, 2022

Playing God

I have been accused more than once of trying to "play God." I do not take such a charge lightly. It has cost me long thoughts and deep self-examination. First of all it has caused me to think a lot about the role that God actually plays in the universe.

God is most fundamentally the Creator — the foundation of all reality. Nothing exists without Him (Acts 17.24-26). Out of that He possesses absolute authority. It is not derived, but intrinsic to Himself. His will and reality are the same. He is greater than all (John 10.29) and gives account to none (Romans 9.20). His wish is the final word on everything (Romans 3.4). He also possesses the absolute right of judgement (Hebrews 12.23) and does so out of His perfect righteousness (Psalm 119.142) and perfect knowledge (1 Corinthians 4.5; Hebrews 4.12-13).

It seems inconceivable in the face of this that any man, created and finite, should attempt to behave as if he were God, Creator and infinite. But it is just such an effort that is at the heart of the human problem. The Bible's story is one of men who have not been content with the greatness of being creatures, even creatures made in the image of God. They have instead aspired to be God, with right over all and responsibility to none. One would think that any attempt on man's part to seize the throne of the universe would be glaringly obvious. In fact, such attempts are more subtle than we know. Let's think carefully about some ways in which we can attempt to "play God."

Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

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We can attempt to play God by rebelling against His will. The genius of sin is in the pride which makes men think that they know better where their best interest lie than the One who made them. Like Eve, they wish to call the shots of life for themselves and are tempted by Satan's puerile lie that God does not care for them; that He has deceived them and denied them the only thing worthwhile. Every sinner has rebelled against his Maker and determined to set up shop on his own, beholden to no one. He has fallen for the old enticement, "ye shall be as God" (Genesis 3.5).

We can attempt to play God by judging God's rule in the world. This was the failing of Job. He was a good and godly man but his suffering was intense and long and his disappointments deep. In the bitterness of his soul he complained that God's treatment of him was unjust and though righteous he was receiving the judgement of the wicked (Job 10). God replied by asking His servant a barrage of questions impossible for Job to answer; for a man who presumes to judge God must surely stand above Him and be wiser than He (Job 38). At last Job must confess his arrogant presumption and repent (Job 42). We fall into the same trap when we begin to think that God has gotten everything all wrong. The clay cannot say the Potter, "Why didst thou make me thus?" (Romans 9.20).

We can attempt to play God by the unloving condemnation of others. Often in our anger and pride we take great delight in consigning other people to the nether regions. Our statements are not redemptive warnings calculated to turn people from destruction but smug edicts intended to humiliate. We become like the sons of Zebedee, ready to call down fire from heaven having forgotten that Jesus came to save rather than to destroy (Luke 9.53-54). Our Lord warns of such harsh and unmerciful condemnation of others (Matthew 7.1-5), and attempt to sit on God's throne and judge His servants (Romans 14.4). We are neither good enough or wise enough to assume such a role. Our task, as God's servants, is to humbly speak His truth in love and stand firmly upon it (Ephesians 4.14-15). Others will do with what they will and God, who has the right, will judge their case.

We can attempt to play God by presuming to speak for Him. This is as subtle a trap as any. Some men become more righteous than God and find it satisfying to be harder than the Almighty. For them, the hard line is always the true line and they fall in with the Pharisees, "teaching as their doctrine the precepts of men" (Mark 7.7). And lay on men heavy burdens, grievous to be borne (Matthew 23.4). It is for this real or supposed infraction that many are accused of "playing God."

But there is an even more subtle form of presuming to speak for God, and that is the effort to be more merciful than "the Father of mercies." Some people, in an effort not to judge others too severely, begin to presumptuously deliver them from God's clear commandments. Like the unrighteous steward, they begin cutting the Lord's demands in half. They make soothing statements about how sure they are that the Creator is not specially concerned about this particular violation of His will or that particular presumption on His silence. Never do we more blatantly play God and toy with men's souls than when presume to deny power to what He has spoken. Our task is the task of the creature, the servant. As Peter says, "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God...that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4.11).

Let us be content to be men. It is a high calling.

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