

THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY WITH GOD

By David Lee Burris

I remember well the lyrics to the 1960's song *The Games People Play*:

**“Oh the games people play now, Every night and every day now,
Never meaning what they say now, Never saying what they mean,
And they wile away the hours, In their ivory towers,
Till they're covered up with flowers, In the back of a black limousine,**

**Oh we make one another cry, Break a heart then we say goodbye,
Cross our hearts and we hope to die, That the other was to blame,
Neither one ever will give in, So we gaze at our eight by ten,
Thinking 'bout the things that might have been, It's a dirty rotten shame,**

**Look around tell me what you see, What's happening to you and me,
God grant me the serenity, To remember who I am,
Cause you've given up your sanity, For your pride and your vanity,
Turned your back on humanity, And you don't give a bleep.”**

Spiritual Children Playing Hide & Seek with God in the Garden:

“The spiritual life is, as the text from Jeremiah 29: 13-14 suggests, something like a great celestial game of hide and seek, full of all the thrills and adventure of the game we played as kids. ‘If you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord’ (vv. 13, 14). Now, no metaphor of the faith is ever entirely adequate, but this one is, I think, suggestive of some intriguing ways of understanding the nature of our spiritual journey.

We come to the strange truth, the great surprise, the profound paradox of this celestial game. While we are called to seek, Scripture also makes it clear that, in contrast to the game we played as kids, it is God who actually does the finding.

So, the rules of the game appear to go something like this: seeking is our task, 'finding' is God's. The 'finding' is God's promise to us, God's work for us, God's gift of grace in our seeking lives... If we 'seek' with all our heart, God promises that we will find our way home... where, when, or exactly how, we may not always know, but he promise is, 'I will let you find me, says the Lord.'" - Stephen Brachlow

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The Other Lesson from Playing the Original Garden Maze Game:

"One doesn't have to search very far in our world to realize that we live in a culture that doesn't trust words very much. We use words by the bushel. We are the 'Information Age.' We process words by the billions, but we don't trust them very much. We know that words can be slippery, weasel things. Words can be used to conceal, to deceive, to distort. Words are cheap; people can hide behind words.

We don't trust words. They are sneaky; talk is cheap. Don't give us words; give us substance. As Edgar Guest put it, uncomfortably close to home: 'I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.'

The distrust of words is nothing new. Indeed, it's been in the human spirit almost from the beginning. According to the story of Adam and Eve, the situation began to deteriorate in Eden precisely at the point that the serpent began to raise the possibility that words just might not be all that they seem: 'Did God say...? No, you will not die.'

Words are a gift from God. They were, in a sense, the first elements of communion. Whatever else we lost in Eden, we lost the trustworthiness of language. Men and women became afraid, and because they became afraid, they began to hide – from God and each other – behind fig leaves and behind lying words." - Thomas Long in Exposition of John 4: 16 – 26

Christ Only Asks If You Serious Seek the Truth that Transforms:

“In John 5: 1-9, there is an interesting story about Jesus’ encounter with a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. So weakened was the man that he could not walk. Daily he would be brought to a curative spa named Bethesda, or ‘house of mercy,’ which was located by the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. This natural spring was surrounded by five porticoes on which the sick and disabled gathered. It was a scene of great misery and lost hopes.

When Jesus first met this sick man, he asked him a question that sounded ridiculous: ‘Do you wish to get well?’ (v. 6, NASV). The man was probably incensed by the question and wanted to reply with a short, biting answer: ‘Of course I want to get well. Why else would I be here, dummy?’ Yet, there was something earnest and piercing about Jesus’ question that cut through his defenses.

It is a fact that many people do not want to be cured of the circumstances that cause them pain in life. A classic example is the hypochondriac who does not really enjoy being sick and wishes he could be rid of the symptoms that plague him. Yet, he knows that if he gets well, he will no longer have manipulative power to control his family and friends. As long as he is sick, he can call the shots, demand attention, and receive sympathy. Though he sincerely wants to be well, he much prefers the disease over his own loss of control.

To be cured of deep and long-term problems, we must desire only one thing – to get well. We cannot ride the fence. We cannot desire healing and cling to disease at the same time. We must decide to be sick or get well.” – Scott Walker

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