



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

James warned that playing God with others and ourselves can be a very dangerous game. Coming off some pointed words about the sources of and solutions to relationship conflicts, James continued his candid teaching on the value of humility and genuine submission to the will and purposes of God.

Pour yourself a generous cup of coffee or tea and be ready to swallow some pretty large pills here!



## Getting Started: Playing God with Others and Ourselves

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 4. The context of any given passage you're studying is very important. A good rule of thumb is to read a few verses prior to the opening of a new chapter or the verses that follow the passage you are considering. Remember: At times it's helpful to read the same passage in multiple versions for comparison.

## Quotable

*If you determine to play God, you are viewing yourself as qualified to be a critic and put other people down. That attitude is unacceptable in the family of God.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





**Helpful Hint**

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 4:11–17, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



**Your Turn in the Scriptures**

Using James 4:11–17, apply the four primary techniques for searching the Scriptures to study this important teaching from James. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries and Bible dictionaries that covers this section of James 4. Feel free to jot notes as you go in the margins of your Bible or on a separate sheet of paper. Then go through the following techniques to make your discoveries.

*Observation: What do you see?*

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, questions, connecting words such as *but* or *therefore*, and images or figures of speech. Make notes as specific as you can at this stage.

James 4:11–12

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**JAMES**  
**Hands-On Christianity**  
**The Peril of Playing God**  
*James 4:11–17*

James 4:13–15

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James 4:16–17

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*Interpretation: What does it mean?*

James 4:11–12

According to these verses, how do we play God when we judge other people?

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Why did James introduce the idea of the “law” in this section? What was he referring to?

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Who did James identify as the only one qualified to judge the actions and motives of others? Why is this significant?

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James 4:13–15

Why was James concerned about how Christians tend to make presumptions about the future (4:13)? How did he develop this point?

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What image from nature did James use to describe the brevity of the human lifespan? Why would he use an image rather than simply saying, “Your lifespan is extremely short”? What deeper truth was he perhaps hoping to convey?

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*Correlation: How does it compare?*

Read the following passages in your Bible, and write a note or two as to how these verses help confirm the meaning of the passage in James 4.

Numbers 12:1, 8

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Job 19:1–3

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Psalms 50:20

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Matthew 7:1

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John 7:24

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Romans 2:1–3

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1 Corinthians 5:12–13

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*Application: What difference does it make?*

After coming under the teaching of James in this section of his letter, if someone desires to stop playing God, there are two applications to consider embracing (James 4:17).

*First, you must know the right thing to do.* That means you must evaluate your attitudes, actions, words, and thoughts; bring them up against the scrutiny of the Word of God; and determine what needs to change.

*Second, you must then follow through and do the right thing.* Once the Lord reveals to you those areas where you are playing God with others or with yourself, you must be willing to repent of them and start doing what is right—which is to leave the judging to Him, the only One qualified to make those judgments, and commit to living your life in submission to His will.

In the spaces below, write out two additional personalized applications (responses) to what you have studied in James 4:11–17.

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

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

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### A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord, thank You for the pointedness of Your Word and for the way in which You speak clearly to me from its pages. Continue to teach me to be as responsive and open to Your voice as I need to be, for the glory of Your great name. Amen.*



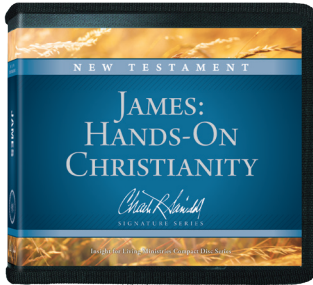
**JAMES**  
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**The Peril of Playing God**  
*James 4:11–17*

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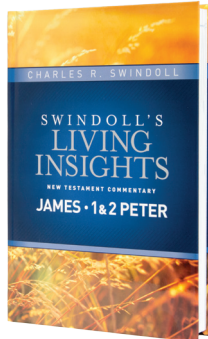
MESSAGE MATE



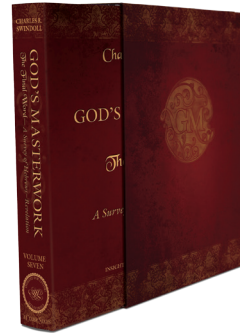
Tools for Digging Deeper



**James: Hands-On  
Christianity**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
CD series



**Swindoll's Living Insights  
New Testament Commentary:  
James, 1 & 2 Peter**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
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For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts. It was released as a Message Mate through Insight for Living Ministries.



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