

## Games People Play, Part One

### *Monopoly – Who’s in Control?*

**Game** – a competitive activity requiring skill, chance, endurance, or adherence to rules (*people play games all the time!*)

#### **MONOPOLY:**

- World’s most popular board game
- Invented by Charles Darrow, unemployed salesman and amateur inventor in Germantown, Pennsylvania during the Great Depression following the stock market crash of 1929
- In more prosperous times, he and his wife had enjoyed many vacations at a seaside resort in New Jersey called Atlantic City
- He originally sketched out the board game on a piece of oilcloth covering his table, using free paint samples for color, scraps of wooden molding for houses/hotels, stray pieces of cardboard for title deeds, and colored buttons for tokens
- Soon “Monopoly evenings” became a regular pastime at the Darrow home, and friends wanted to have their own copy – that’s how Charles got into production and eventually sold the rights to Parker Brothers (originally rejected because the game contained “fifty-two fundamental errors,” including that it had no set “end point”)
- In 1970, a few years after Darrow’s death, Atlantic City erected a commemorative plaque in his honor. It stands on the Boardwalk, near the juncture of Park Place.

The game allowed them to control large amounts of money and property, escaping the crushing financial reality all around them ... because the object of Monopoly is “to become the wealthiest player through buying, renting and selling of property.” However, we all know that there are as many different strategies for Monopoly as there are players ... and that the REAL object of Monopoly is to “**CONTROL THE BOARD.**”

One of the “games people play” in real life is the game of CONTROL ...

- **We try to control our image.**  
We want to control what other people think of us; we don’t want them to know what we are really like. So we wear masks and deny our feelings, hoping to impress them. Why am I afraid to tell you who I am? Because if I’m honest and you don’t like me, ME is all I’ve got!
- **We try to control other people.**  
Parents try to control kids, kids try to control parents, wives try to control husbands, husbands try to control wives, friends try to control friends. We use lots of tools to attempt to manipulate each other (i.e. guilt, fear, praise, silent treatment, anger, moods, etc.).

- **We try to control our problems.**  
We’re really quite good at this – we say: “I can handle it,” “It’s really not a problem,” “I’m fine,” “I don’t need any help,” “I can quit any time,” “I’ll work it out on my own.” That’s just somebody trying to play God! But the more you try to fix the problem, the worse it gets!
- **We try to control our pain.**  
Have you ever thought how much time you spend running from pain? Trying to avoid it, deny it, escape it, reduce it, or just postpone it. People try to postpone pain by eating, not eating, getting drunk, smoking, doing drugs, or by getting in and out of relationships.

The Bible has a word for this tendency toward self-defeating behavior – **SIN!** My sinful nature gets me in all kinds of problems. I do things that aren’t good for me and I don’t do things that are good for me. I respond the wrong way when I’m hurt and it just increases the hurt, rather than lessening it. I try to fix problems and often when I finish they are worse than when I started.

**Romans 7:15-17** For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

**Proverbs 14:12** There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Behind all of my problems is this attitude: **I WANT TO BE IN CONTROL.** But what I’m really saying is: **I WANT TO BE GOD.** It is mankind’s oldest problem; it is humanity’s original sin. I want to decide what’s right and wrong. I want to call the shots and make my own rules. I want to put myself at the center of the universe, be my own boss and live my own way. If it feels good, then I want to do it! I don’t want anyone else telling me how I should act. I want to “control the board.” That’s called playing God. And the more insecure you are, the more you’re driven to control.

#### **THERE ARE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES WHEN WE “PLAY GOD” ...**

- **FEAR.**  
When we try to control everything we get afraid that somebody’s going to find out who we really are, that we’re a fake, that we really don’t have it all together, that we’re not perfect. So we live our lives in fear, afraid that somebody’s going to reject us because they don’t really know what we’re like. We think, “they only like an image of me – if they really knew what I was like, they wouldn’t like me.” *We act superior, but we feel inferior.*

**Genesis 3:10** And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

- **FRUSTRATION.**

Have you ever seen the carnival game played with the mallet? You slam one thing down and another pops up. That's life! It's so frustrating because you can't keep all your issues down at the same time. The frustration you feel is the symptom of a deeper problem that you have not dealt with – you're not God, and when you try to control things, it doesn't work!

**Psalms 32:2-3** Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

- **FAILURE.**

When you try to play God, that's one job you're guaranteed to fail at. You need to be honest and open about your weaknesses, faults and failures. In fact, our church needs to be a safe place where real people can talk about real problems, real hurts, real hang-ups, real habits, and not be blown away by our judgmental attitude!

**Proverbs 28:13** He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Throughout life, we all learn various coping systems that seem to work for a time when we need to get attention or block out pain. But as the years progress, these same ideas confuse and cloud our view of the truth, our perception of ourselves, and our expectations of those around us. The longer we hold on to them, the more unrealistic and distorted they become ... and eventually they grow into DENIAL!

**Jeremiah 6:14** They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

**2 Peter 2:19** While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Unfortunately, it is human nature that we seldom change until our pain becomes greater than the fear of change. **We don't change when we see the light – we change when we feel the heat** (and things start falling apart)! Pain is God's warning light on the dashboard of our lives.

The Bible teaches that in admitting my weakness I will find strength. But this is exactly the opposite of what our culture teaches us!

**2 Corinthians 12:9** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

- **I admit I am powerless to change my past.**

It hurt and I still remember it, but all the resentment in the world isn't going to change the past.

- **I admit I am powerless to control other people.**

I am responsible for my actions, not those of other people. All of my gimmicks won't control their lives.

- **I admit I am powerless to cope with my harmful behaviors.**

Good intentions and will power are not enough. I need a power beyond myself. I need God, because He made me to need Him!

**James 4:6** But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

What is grace? **GRACE IS THE POWER TO CHANGE!**

What is it that you are afraid will happen if you give God control of your life? You say, "I don't want anybody controlling me." Who are you kidding? You're being controlled all the time. You're controlled by the opinions of other people. You're controlled by hurts you can't forget. You controlled by habits, hang-ups, or even your own ego!

But you get to CHOOSE who you're being controlled by when you let God control your life. Real freedom is choosing who your master will be. **REAL FREEDOM IS CHOOSING WHO CONTROLS YOU.**

Have you ever bought a house or got married? You make the decision, but then you have to work out a thousand details after the decision.

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A DECISION FOLLOWED BY A PROCESS.**

It is the same dealing with problems after you are saved. It is a decision followed by a process. All we're talking about today is the DECISION.

**Philippians 1:6** Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: