

Torturing God

READING

1 John 4

1 Peter 3

*If anyone says, "I love God",
but hates his brother, they're a
liar. For the one who doesn't
love his brother whom he sees
— how are they able to love
God whom they haven't seen?*

My wife and I really like playing strategic board games. They're a lot of fun, especially with other friends. And they can make for a great social evening.

Recently we got a digital version of a two player card game that we both like. So, I was playing against the computer... and doing pretty well. My strategy was working, my hand was becoming more and more powerful.

I realised I could deliver the winning hand and end the game. Victorious.

But I chose not to play the cards that would defeat my opponent, and held on for another hand.

And another, ... and another...

All the time, my hand was becoming stronger and stronger. His was becoming weaker and weaker.

There was no way I could lose. I was revelling in my power.

If I had been playing against my wife, (or anyone for that matter), I wouldn't have dragged it out like that.

Making the other player suffer endlessly, knowing they had no chance, but forced to continue.

So what is it in us, that lets us treat a faceless computer opponent like that?

I was torturing my opponent!

And justifying it with, "It's just a computer".

When we lived in Japan, at first we were amazed at how polite, respectful and considerate Japanese people are of each other.

They always line up patiently waiting for trains. They go out of their way to help you find your way if you're lost.

Things like that.

But here's a weird thing.

Once the line for the train is "broken" and people are boarding, it's suddenly every person for themselves.

I've seen a businessman hip bump an older lady to make sure he got the last seat.

So totally out of character for a Japanese person! But it happens every day.

In Japan, once you're anonymous, you can change your personality completely.

If someone you know is watching, you will always be polite. Always.

But when it's just you and a little old lady...

It's kind of the same as the card game isn't it.

Against a person I'm considerate, against a computer, where nobody is looking back at me... I'm ruthless and selfish.

So how does that relate to the way we treat God?

Is he personal to you? Or a disembodied, spirit?

Is he more like a computer? Or a human?

You know he's actually watching you all the time right? 24x7.

Are you happy to push him out of the way to get the last seat?

Do you do things which upset him, without even giving it a thought?

Would you torture him?

Do you?

How differently would you treat God if he was physically standing in the room?

Maybe you are convinced you would still treat him well, visible or not.

So, think about how you treat others? Actual people.

Yohannes said, "If you say you love God, but you hate your brother... you're a liar."

And Petros, "And finally, all of you, be like minded, be sympathetic, loving like brothers, tender hearted, courteous. Not giving back evil for evil, or criticism for criticism, but on the contrary, blessing, because you know that this is what you were called to, so that you may inherit a blessing.

For whoever wants to love life, and to see good days, let them keep their tongue from evil, and let their lips not speak deceit, let them turn away from evil, and let them do good, let them seek peace and pursue it. Because the eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their petition, but the face of Yahweh is against those who do evil."

Would you torture Yahweh?

Do you?