

There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

- James 4:12

I. JUDGING THE LAW OF CHRIST

- There are many ways to misuse language (for James, “the tongue”). One of them is to speak evil of a brother or sister in Christ, regardless of the truth or lack of truth related to the story.
 - *Gossip: Sharing a true story where it should not be shared.
 - *Slander: Creating or sharing a false story or one that carries with it only the intent to cause harm. (vs. 11; Lev. 19:16; Ps. 15:1-5; Prov. 6:16; Titus 3:10-11).
- God’s law prohibits slander and demands that we love one another, especially our brethren (Lev. 19:16; Matt. 19:19; Gal. 6:10; Titus 3:1-3).
- We break the law of Christ when he demands love and we respond with defamation. We judge the law of Christ when we say it is wrong to demand love and claim moral superiority over it (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Acts 23:5).

II. ONE LAWGIVER—ONE JUDGE

- We are called to be discerning in our judgment. James is not disallowing all judgments, only those that are based on false premises, hypocrisy, jealousy, or are simply censorious for the sake of condemning others (Matt. 7:1-5, 15-19; John 7:24; Rom. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 5:1-13).
- Only God can make good, ultimately, on his judgments. We do not possess any power beyond death (Heb. 9:27).
- Judgment awaits all of us. It begins here and now for the church—it is intended to purify us (1 Pet. 4:17-19).

KNOW: God is the final judge of human lives and behavior. It is wise to leave judgment in his capable hands. Speaking evil and stirring up dissension within the body of Christ passes judgment on God and his law.

DO: Be slow to judge, then judge wisely.

Recommended Reading:

Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ
by A. Naselli & J.D. Crowley (LifePoint Library #248.4 NAS)

Questions/Discovery Points for Life Groups/Families

Please read James 4:11-12

1. How does James seem to feel about the judging that is taking place in the churches of Christ?
2. What effect does gossip and slander have on the church family?
3. How do we effectively put a stop to such behavior?
4. Why is judging in general roundly condemned in Scripture?
5. How do we discern the difference between just judgment and unjust judgment?
6. Why do you think James takes the opportunity to remind us about God’s power and authority here?
7. What are your takeaways from Sunday’s message?