



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

CRITICAL SPEECH/CONDEMNING WORDS: PART 1- JAMES 4:11

COLORADO

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Never forget that the sinner's sincere approach to God is assured of God's favorable and immediate response, He will draw near to you! If we sincerely draw near to God, then we can be confident of His promised response, "and He will draw near to you." Just as in Luke 15:20, the prodigal son received his father's favorable response when he repented and returned in humility to his father, so believers find God watching; waiting to welcome and restore His children into His waiting arms of fellowship. God wants us to know Him, to seek Him and we will find Him; in rich fellowship and communion when we search for Him with all our heart. (Jeremiah 29:12-14) How do we come to God? With a sincere, repentant, clean and pure heart! How do we draw near to God? Daily, individually and corporately; devoted to communion with Jesus Christ and cultivating constant fellowship with God. And what comes from drawing near to God- a sweet fellowship with our living Lord and eternal God!

CRITICAL SPEECH/PERSONAL ATTACK: PART 1- JAMES 4:11

James 4:11: "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it."

Humility and the right attitude toward God will and must give us the right attitude towards other people, especially fellow believers. But is this the attitude we find towards each other? As James proceeds into these next verses, it is with the chief call to humble ourselves before God and submit to Him for the mark of true faith will be humility. Yet, because of malicious attitudes and actions in the church, obviously humility is seriously lacking. Here in these verses, the issue of habitual slander becomes a test of genuine faith and a measure of spiritual maturity. James once again addresses critical speech and condemning words because slander is so widespread. In fact, it may be so common that we fail to recognize its significance unless we are the other end of the slander, but James demands a reality check for all believers because this is such a destructive sin.

I. THE COMMAND – JAMES 4:11A

James 4:11a - "Do not speak against one another, brethren."

James speaks in the present tense, demanding an immediate response to the personal attacks and judgmental attitudes in the church.

do not+Greek **me**," demand that the action be terminated immediately, now and never in the future.

Speaking in the present tense shows this practice among believers is habitual and ongoing. James begins with the charge, "Do not" mandating that the action be terminated now and never continued in the future.

II. THE ISSUES - JAMES 4:11B

James 4:11: "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; "

What does James exhort all believers to stop immediately? James calls for immediate obedience to stop speaking evil against and maliciously condemning one another for who we are called to love. This study will concentrate on the first rebuke of slander and speaking evil about each other. We can't have a casual attitude towards slander and it is clear that this had become a habitual practice among them. What about us?

A. CRITICAL SPEECH/ PERSONAL ATTACKS

James 4:11: "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother,"

First James addresses slanderous speech and then condemning attitudes. And he refers back to the major way their quarrels and fights are expressed from James 4:1 where the chapter began. Remember how harsh James 4:1-3 begins? We get a clearer picture as to why from James 4:11.

do not speak against+Greek **me katalaleirte**," means to speak down on, speaking evil against, talk against, harmful slander, backbiter.

James speaks to any hurtful or harmful speech whereby we talk against or speak evil against a brother or sister in Christ. Slander refers to mindless, thoughtless, careless critical derogatory speech directed against others.¹ Slander is the antithesis of what we should share as fellow believers. James isn't referring to an occasional slip of the tongue, but rather one who is constantly criticizing a fellow believer. We would expect such wounding words from those outside the church, but they shouldn't come from within. Slander has devastating effects that denigrates dignity, defames character and destroys reputations. We must stop "speaking down on" meaning to stop running each other down, stop speaking evil against one another.

It is important to note that this would include willful, false accusations, exaggeration of faults that are real, needless repetition of real faults and outright slander.² Kittel says that the point is not the falsity of what is said, but rather its' uncharitableness.³ So basically, this is critical, derogatory speech that is maliciously intended to influence others against the person being spoken of and being spoken against. It is deliberately calling attention to the faults of others while minimizing their virtues.⁴ When we gossip about one another, we are taking a true story where it should not go. When we slander, we create a false story and spread it. Both are included in James' warning here because both cause harm and are sin. And keep in mind; it is generally assumed that the harsh, critical remarks are about one who is not present. How true is that?

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0107

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CRITICAL SPEECH/CONDEMNING WORDS: PART 1- JAMES 4:11

This same term is also used in 1 Peter 2:12 and 3:16 only here it refers to the persecution of Christians by unbelievers. James is saying that they were guilty of the same malicious speech as unbelievers and implicates their unbrotherly practice. Speaking evil against your brother stems from a pride that God opposes as James 4:6 makes clear. We must begin with a high view of God and a proper humble view of ourselves. If we are low before God, humble as we learned from James 4:10, then we have no “altitude left from which to talk down” to anyone!⁵ Slander stems from an arrogance that would denigrate others.

James uses the pronoun “one another”, in his rebuke which is a reciprocal pronoun revealing that these action were not one sided. Those being slandered were slandering as well. The slander was reciprocated.

James uses the word “brethren” repeatedly in this verse, which forms a serious rebuke of their **unbrotherly** love. Scripture is clear about malicious speech and slander denouncing its practice. Just read Leviticus 19:16, Psalm 15:3, Jeremiah 6:28, Romans 1:30. Colossians 3:8 calls on us to put slander away and 1 Peter 2:1 commands us not to do it. Galatians 5:15 describes this behavior, “*But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.*” Speaking against our brother can have devastating effects and should never be named in the Christian community. Proverbs 16:27-28 says, “*A worthless man digs up evil while his words are as a scorching fire. A perverse man spreads strife and a slanderer separates intimate friends.*” Even our government realizes the harm that can be done through slander and therefore provides us with the right to sue for defamation of character. It is wrong and must stop. It shouldn’t even be named among believers.

Suppose I do know something to someone’s discredit. Well, my task is not to publicize it, nor even privately berate him with it, but to go where he is and lift him up. I must be the Samaritan to him...he is my neighbor.⁶ We must remember that love covers a multitude of sins **not** for the purpose of hiding or not dealing with it, but so as not to slander or call attention to ones’ faults. 1 Peter 4:8 says, “*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*” This requires a sincere and genuine love for our fellow believers that never seeks to hurt, harm or defame with slanderous words.

This sin James calls out has the evil and hostile intention aimed at disparaging a person’s character or position. We do not get a pass, even if the thing of which we speak to others is true. We don’t have to tell lies to denigrate someone. Defaming is forbidden not because it isn’t true, but because it is not humble! Lest we forget, this is an activity closely related to the devil who is called the slanderer.

III. REVIEW- JAMES 4:11A

James 4:11a: “Do not speak against one another, brethren.”

James calls for the immediate termination of malicious evil talk against one another, our brothers and sisters whom we are called to love. This warning is addressed throughout Scripture communicating the seriousness of such evil speech. Keep in mind; James is not saying to stop dealing with sin in the body of Christ! It is imperative that we pursue holiness and hold one another accountable to sin. God instructs us clearly how to go about that. But James is addressing speech that has the intent to hurt and harm, deliberately calling attention to the fault of others while minimizing their virtues. It is an evil intent aimed at eroding the character of our brother or sister. It is thoughtless, careless, critical derogatory speech against one another. What we are saying might even be true; we don’t have to tell a lie to defame. And usually, the one who is spoken against with harsh critical remarks often isn’t present. Remember, humility and the right attitude toward God will give us the right attitude towards people. And the issue of habitual slander towards others in the community of believers becomes a test of genuine faith and a measure of spiritual maturity.

Do you speak evil of your brother or sister in Christ? Are the words you say secretly intending to influence others against the person spoken of? Are you deliberately calling attention to someone’s faults, even if it is true, while minimizing their virtues? Are you trying to erode the position or character of your brother or sister in Christ even if what you are saying is true? What’s your motive? Is it to build up the body of Christ or to tear down and harm? Do you talk down about someone thinking that in some way it might make you look better? In a world that loves a juicy bite of gossip or slander, you can be popular, but it doesn’t please God. Oh that a genuine consideration for our neighbors would begin to replace the hurtful and arrogant word by helpful and caring concern.⁷ In our next study James focuses on condemning words and judgmental attitudes. So take some time and evaluate your words and the motives behind them. May this be our prayer!

“Examine me, O Lord,

And try me;

Test my mind and my heart.

Psalm 26:2

¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.221.

²Wolff, Richard, *General Epistle of James and Jude*. Tyndale: Wheaton, Ill., 1969. Pg. 72.

³Kittel, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1964. Pg. 4-5.

⁴Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 241.

⁵Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.157.

⁶Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.157.

⁷Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.158.