

“Slandering and Judging”  
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## **The Root of Division in the Church**

Over the last couple of weeks, we’ve been talking about division within the church—why relationships are broken and why that happens. James tells us it’s because of our own selfish desires. I have a desire for someone to like me, or I want something, but I haven’t really asked God for it. And if I haven’t asked God, then I’m not going to the right source.

What happens is, I start to feel like someone in the church is keeping me from getting what makes me happy. And now I’m angry at them. But James says we shouldn’t be angry at that person, because our happiness isn’t supposed to come from them. What we desire should be fulfilled by God in the first place. So, when we place that expectation on others, it’s misplaced. There shouldn’t be these types of divisions within the body of Christ—if we are humble in our faith and humble in our lives.

Remember what we read last week in *James 4:10*:

*“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” — James 4:10*

We’re not trying to lift ourselves up by hurting other people. We’re seeking God for our joy and fulfillment. And in doing that, we humble ourselves and allow God to lift us up.

These divisions are just one of many signs the book of James gives us to show whether our faith is genuine. If you read James, it’s basically one test after another: How do you deal with trials? With temptation? With relationships? Do you have works that accompany your faith? If not, your faith may not be genuine.

## **Slander and the Test of Genuine Faith**

Today, James dives deeper into one specific issue: slander. Do you know what slander is? It’s when you say something—often a lie or a twisted version of the truth—about someone with the intent to hurt them. It’s usually done behind their back. We don’t want to confront someone face-to-face; we’d rather shoot them in the back, so to speak. So we go and tell others things—maybe with a little truth in it, but exaggerated or distorted—to make someone look bad.

Why? Often, it’s to make ourselves feel better or to elevate our own status. But remember, we’re supposed to humble ourselves. When someone regularly slanders and condemns others, they’re revealing their old, evil nature—not the new nature that’s been transformed by God.

When you hear someone in the church slandering another person, you have every reason to wonder about the genuineness of their faith. Because this is one of the proofs. Our faith isn't proven by how we feel—it's proven by what we do. Our actions reveal the truth.

Let's look at what James says:

*“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?” — James 4:11–12*

This is one of the most quoted parts of Scripture—especially by people who aren't Christians. You've probably heard, “Thou shalt not judge.” But that's not actually a commandment. It's a misquote.

James is talking to the church. He says, “Brothers and sisters.” So for us, that means: you folks at Sunrise, you folks at the Farm, you folks here—don't slander each other. Don't tear each other down. Your reputation is one of the most important things you have. And when someone tries to destroy that for no reason, that's not right.

### **The Seriousness of Slander**

Christians—especially those who identify as followers of Christ—should not slander one another. That includes slandering non-believers too, but James is specifically addressing quarrels within the church. He's talking about how we treat each other in the body of Christ.

Let's define slander clearly: it's saying something that isn't true about someone, with evil intentions. And slander is at the center of a lot of evil in the world. It's one of the most condemned sins in all of Scripture—more than adultery, even. It's talked about constantly.

Look at *Proverbs 6:16–19*:

*“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.” — Proverbs 6:16–19*

Three of the seven things God hates are directly related to how we talk about others. Two more relate to the attitude that leads to that kind of speech. That's five out of seven.

Think about Jesus. Why was He crucified? Because people made up lies about Him. They twisted His words. They said, “He claimed to be God,” or “He said He'd destroy the temple

and rebuild it in three days.” They distorted the truth to justify killing Him. Think about Joseph. He was thrown in jail because Potiphar’s wife slandered him—accused him of something he didn’t do. In the book of Esther, Haman slandered the Jews to justify wiping them out. Evil people slander because they’re acting like their father—the devil.

### **The Devil—The Original Slanderer**

Jesus makes it clear in *John 8:43–45*:

*“Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.” — John 8:43–45*

Satan was a liar from the beginning. He was the first slanderer—of God. Go back to *Genesis 3*. The serpent comes to Eve and twists God’s words. God had said, “If you eat from this tree, you will die.” But Satan says, “You will not certainly die.” He slanders God’s character, suggesting that God is withholding something good. He says, “God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.”

That slander. That’s deception. That’s satanic.

And it’s still happening today. Look at the war in the Middle East. You hear slander about Israel—claims that the land was stolen, that it never belonged to them. These lies are told with evil intent: to justify violence, to wipe out a people. That’s satanic slander. It’s been going on for thousands of years.

So, when we slander others—when we twist the truth or speak with harmful motives—we’re not just being unkind. We’re aligning ourselves with the father of lies. Our speech reveals what’s in our hearts and who we belong to.

That’s why James says this is a test of genuine faith. How do you speak about others—especially within the church?

### **Judging Others and Judging the Law**

James continues:

*“Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.” — James 4:11*

What does it mean to “judge the law”? This is one of the most misunderstood ideas in Scripture. People often quote *Matthew 7:1*:

*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” — Matthew 7:1*

And they stop there. But that’s not the whole passage. It continues:

*“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” — Matthew 7:2*

It’s not saying, “Don’t judge at all.” It’s saying, “Be careful how you judge, because you’ll be judged by the same standard.” If you’re judging based on your own opinions or standards, you’re putting yourself in the place of God. But if you’re judging based on what God has already said in His Word, that’s different.

Jesus continues:

*“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” — Matthew 7:3–5*

It doesn’t say, “Leave the speck in your brother’s eye.” It says, “First deal with your own sin, then you’ll be able to help your brother.” That’s judgment—but it’s righteous judgment. It’s judgment that begins with humility and self-examination.

Then in *Matthew 7:6:6*

What does that mean? It means you have to judge whether someone is ready to receive the truth. If someone isn’t going to accept correction, don’t throw your pearls—your spiritual insight—at them. They’ll just trample it and turn on you.

Even Jesus, when He stood before Pilate and the religious leaders, didn’t say anything. Why? Because it would’ve been pearls to swine. They weren’t going to listen.

So when James says, *“When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it,”* he’s saying: you’re not God. You don’t get to decide what’s right and wrong. You don’t get to override God’s Word.

## **The One True Judge**

James writes:

*“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?” — James 4:12*

You are not the judge. God is. You don’t get to determine what’s right and wrong based on your own standards. You can only make judgments about sin based on what God has already said is sinful.

Let’s say God says something is a sin—like homosexuality, for example—and you say, “I disagree. I don’t think that’s a sin.” What you’re doing is placing yourself above God. You’re saying, “God is wrong. I’m right. I’m a better judge than He is.” That’s exactly what Satan did in the garden. He said, “God didn’t really mean that. God’s wrong.”

But it goes both ways. If God calls something sinful and you say, “It’s not,” you’re still judging the law. You’re still saying, “God’s judgment is wrong, and mine is better.” We don’t get to flip God’s Word. We don’t get to redefine sin. We don’t get to override the Judge.

### **How to Fix the Problem of Slander and Judgment**

So how do we fix this? James gives us the answer.

First, we have to change how we think about other people. Notice how many times James says “brother” or “sister.” He’s reminding us: you’re talking about family. When you slander someone in the church, you’re slandering a brother or sister in Christ—a child of God.

You wouldn’t go around making up stories about your own sister, would you? You wouldn’t slander her behind her back and make everyone look at her differently. That’s not what a good brother does. That’s what a really bad brother does.

Second, we have to change how we think about the law. God’s law is right. When He gave it, it was right. We have to decide: are we going to stand in judgment over the law, or are we going to submit to it? Even if we don’t understand all the reasons behind it, we trust that God is right.

And third, we have to change how we view God. He is the authority—not us. We humble ourselves so that He will lift us up.

And that means we also have to change how we view ourselves. This isn’t about us. We’re not trying to build ourselves up by tearing others down. We’re not trying to be something we’re not. We’re just trying to live as God asks us to live—humbly, knowing that everything we have comes from Him.

*“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” — James 4:10*

I want to be lifted up by God—not by ripping others to shreds.

**Closing Prayer:**

God, thank You for Your Word. We don't want to slander people. We don't want to hurt people—especially our brothers and sisters. God, change us. Give us a real love for one another. A desire to see each other flourish and grow in faith. We're all related in Christ. When one of us is down, we're all down. So, the last thing we want to do is tear each other down, because it tears us all down.

God, we want You so badly in our lives. Guide us. Lead us. We will consider Your law the true law, above all others. We will see our church family as brothers and sisters. We will view ourselves humbly. And we will honor You as the Almighty Judge who determines what is right and wrong. In Jesus' name, Amen.