

James 4:11-12  
Do Not Speak Against One Another

**Introduction:** Slander is often the by-product of anger and is incongruous to the humble spirit God desires. (BKC) It is a manifestation of the selfish motives that are condemned in 4:1-3. (Varner)

**1) We are told that sinful practices of speech are forbidden—4:11a**

- a) <sup>11</sup> **Do not speak evil against**/fault-finding, false accusations or allegations, defamation, to question legitimate authority, etc. [pres. act. imp. katalale,w] *one another, brothers.*
- b) James has previously addressed our speech in general in 1:26 and 3:1-12. This is a specific type of sinful speech that is both inaccurate and damaging to the character and reputation of someone else. (Varner)
  - i) There **are** times we are to speak the truth against others. This is not evil.
  - ii) If we are really low before God (6–10), we have no ‘altitude’ left from which to ‘talk down’ to anyone! (A. Motyer)
- c) “Brothers” is a significant change from “adulterous people” in 4:4.

**2) We are told how serious it is to use sinful practices of speech—4:11b-12b**

- a) We arrogantly speak against God’s revealed standard: *The one who speaks against* [katalale,w] *a brother or judges* [kri,nw] (to condemn, to determine someone is guilty and liable to punishment) *his brother, speaks evil against* [katalale,w] (slanders) *the law and judges* [kri,nw] (condemns) *the law.*
  - i) To what law is James referring? Cf. Lev. 19:16-18
  - ii) It is to think more highly of your own judgment than that of the law. At that point you sit above the law in judgment rather than following the law. (Douglas Mangum)
  - iii) Do we **really** want to say God’s law is wrong?! This is the law given from God through Moses and rightly interpreted and taught by Jesus.
- b) We presumptuously usurp a responsibility that is not ours: *But if you judge* [kri,nw] *the law, you are not a doer* [poiht,h,j] *of the law* (as you should be) *but a judge* [krith,j] (as you should **not** be).
- c) We stubbornly refuse to submit to God’s uniqueness in position and ability: <sup>12</sup> *There is only one lawgiver* [nomoqe,thj] *and judge* [krith,j], *he who is able* [pres. act. ptc. du,namai] *to save* [aor. act. infin. sw,zw] (to rescue from imminent threat of danger) *and to destroy* [aor. act. infin. avpo,llumi] (to cause ruin).
  - i) Cf. Gen. 18:25; Pos. 82:8; Rom. 3:6; Heb. 12:23

**3) We are told to keep ourselves in proper perspective before God—4:12c**

- a) Contrast to God in 4:12ab: *But who are you to judge* [pres. act. ptc. kri,nw] *your neighbor?* (an echo of “neighbor” from Lev. 19:18)

**4) Things I need to remember:**

- a) We need to root out the harsh, unkind, critical spirit that continually finds fault with others. (D. Burdick)
- b) Defamation begins and lives on in the mind. It is something we say to ourselves long before we pass it on. But if our minds were drilled in biblical attitudes, then love for our brothers would begin to root out censoriousness. (A. Motyer)