

Joyful Life Bible Studies

JAMES 4:11,12

Lesson 17

FIRST DAY: Review and Overview

1. Review James 4:7-10. How has your response to these verses affected your life?
 - a. Reflect a few moments on James 4:10a. List a few of the attitudes and actions that will substantiate this *humbling of ourselves in the sight of God*.
2. Observe and mark the paragraph divisions in James 4:11-17 as follows. Record the one question in each paragraph:
 - a. James 4:11,12
 - b. James 4:13 -17
3. In James 4:11-17 we are confronted by two issues that need our immediate attention if we are serious about our Christian walk. Since *humility* is key to our acceptance of and obedience to the instruction given in James 4:11-17, begin your study of this week's lesson, James 4:11,12, with a prayer. Express to the Lord your desire for a teachable (humble) spirit and a heart willing to obey His commands. Include any other needs you may have in relationship to this lesson. Write your prayer here after meditating a few moments on the following verse:

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness.*

- II Timothy 3:16

SECOND DAY: Read James 4:11,12

1. Print the first sentence of James 4:11 KJV here. Selah - pause and think about this.
 - a. *Speak evil here means to talk against, to find fault with, to defame or slander. Elsewhere in the Bible it is referred to as backbiting (II Corinthians 12:20). Define speak evil of one another in your own words. Note that James is addressing this to Christians speaking evil of other Christians.*

- (1.) It is said that: *Derogatory criticism of others is one of the worst expressions of human pride.* What inward thoughts and attitudes accompany the root cause (pride) of our *speaking evil* about others?
2. To understand the context of James 4:11,12, we need to see it in relationship to James 4:6. (The humble believer's response to God is outlined in James 4:7-10.) The believer's response to other believers is outlined in James 4:11,12. What do you understand from James 4:6 that prompts you to be obedient to James 4:11a?
3. Humility is not a virtue much admired, appreciated, or advocated in today's *me first* culture. Think about Philippians 2:3 in the light of the current philosophy as you write it here.
- a. How will the humility reflected in *esteeming others* keep you from speaking evil about them?
- b. How will *esteeming others* be reflected in the way you speak about them? Give a practical example.

*There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it ill behooves any of us
to speak evil about the rest of us.*

-Anonymous

THIRD DAY: Review James 3:2-6

1. We don't know exactly what was happening in the churches at the time of James' writing of this letter, but we do know that there is too often a casual, careless, or indifferent attitude among believers in this area of James 4:11a. James points up the seriousness of *speaking evil of others* in James 4:11b,12. When we indulge in unkind criticism, gossip, or putting down of others, we don't think of it in the terms of these verses. See this sin from God's perspective through His Word by writing James 4:11 phrase by phrase beginning with:

He that speaketh evil of His brother,

and _____,

speaketh evil _____,

and _____:

but if thou _____,

thou _____,

but _____.

a. Underline or highlight the word *law*.

(1.) To what *law* does this verse refer? See James (1:25)2:8(12) (John 15:12,17)

b. Draw a heart around the word *brother*.

c. Circle the words *judgeth* and *judge*.

(1.) *Judge means to come to a conclusion about or render a verdict.* When we put ourselves in the position of *judging* others, we're arrogantly ignoring the *law of love* and assuming our evaluations and opinions are more important than this *law*. We are *judging this law* to not be worthy of our *doing*. Rather than being a James 1:22a Christian, what does James 4:11 say we are when we violate this law of love? Answer by the last three words of this verse.

(a.) How does James 4:11 correct any flippant attitude we might have concerning *speaking evil* (trashing or shredding) other believers?

2. In what way does Jesus' counsel in Matthew 7:1,2 prompt you to be obedient to James 4:11a?

a. How will you apply Jesus' illustration of the *mote* (speck) and *beam* (plank), (Matthew 7:3-5) when you're tempted to pass along a juicy tidbit that puts a fellow believer in a bad light or disparages another Christian?

(1.) Why do you think Jesus called the man trying to remove the *mote* from his brother's eye a *hypocrite*?

3. What do the following verses teach about *evil speaking*:

a. Ephesians 4:31,32

b. I Peter 2:1,2

c. Explain in practical terms how obedience to these verses will keep one from *speaking evil* about another believer.

FOURTH DAY: Read Luke 18:9-14; John 13:34,35

1. How might Jesus' parable of Luke 18:9-14 apply to James 4:(6,10)11?

2. What attitudes motivate a person to *speak evil* of another believer?

a. Think about the attitudes and behavior that characterize a James 4:6,10 *humble* believer in relationship to *speaking evil of others*. What do you see?

3. We might miss the message of James 4:11a by thinking of the word *evil* as used here as something very wicked and thus define, excuse, rationalize, categorize, or justify our non-edifying criticism or speaking against someone as excusable or acceptable. Explain from James 4:11 and John 15:17 why speaking against other believers is not acceptable.
4. There are times when we have the responsibility of letting another believer know when a brother or sister is in error or sin and his or her influence is endangering other believers or his or her behavior needs correction. What is the difference between this and *speaking evil* of believers?

FIFTH DAY: Read James 4:(11)12; Galatians 5:14

1. When we take on the role of *judge*, (James 4:11) by speaking evil of one another, and we recognize that it is equivalent to speaking evil of the *law* and judging the *law* as not being worthy of our obedience, *we are refusing to submit to God's authority over us*. James emphasizes this by his statement in 4:12a. Write that statement here by filling in the blanks:

a. Who gave the *law* concerning loving one another? Leviticus 19:1,18

b. When we refuse to obey it, Whose authority are we usurping?

(1.) To Whose authority are we to submit ourselves? James 4:7a

(a.) How is *speaking evil* of one another a refusal to submit to God's *authority*?

2. When we *judge* others by speaking evil of them, we are also relying on *our ability* to accomplish something concerning another brother or sister rather than trusting in God's *ability*. What does James 4:12b reveal about His *ability*?

a. What does Matthew 10:28 reveal about God's ability?

b. What do you learn about judging others in relationship to God's ability from Romans 14:4?

c. For a glimpse of God's ability read Hannah's prayer of rejoicing from I Samuel 2:3,6-9. What do you see? Use other versions if you desire.

(1.) Concentrate on God's ability and power revealed here. How is *speaking evil* of believers usurping God's *authority* and discounting His *ability* in another believer's life?

- d. When we feel wronged by another believer or upset because he or she is not doing things our way or we're just disgruntled with them, how will Psalm 46:8-10a help curb our urge to *speaking evil* about them and encourage us to leave them in God's hands?
- (1.) According to I John 5:(14,15)16a, Whom should we talk to when we perceive a believer to be out of line or in sin?
 - (2.) Contrast the instruction in the following verses with the behavior of the *speaking evil* believer of James 4:12c:
 - (a.) Romans 15:1-3
 - (b.) Galatians 6:1-4
3. Someone has paraphrased James 4:12c this way: *who do you think you are?* We recognize from James' question the arrogance embodied in a Christian's *speaking evil* of another believer. To usurp God's *authority* and discount His *ability* is to behave *arrogantly*. Record God's sobering perspective on this from Proverbs 8:13b.
- a. Briefly summarize how James 4:11,12 exposes the lack of obedience to the command of James 4:10a as well as the law of love.
 - b. What do you learn from Micah 6:8 that amplifies our need of humility?
4. Each believer needs to clearly understand that *speaking evil* of other believers is taking a proud (arrogant) position against God. What affect is this understanding of James 4:(11)12 having on your life?

*He is able, more than able
 To accomplish more than I could ever dream
 He is able, more than able
 To make me what He wants me to be.*

SIXTH DAY: Review James 4:11,12

1. How does James 3:2a describe the *perfect* (mature) *man* (believer)?
 - a. Growing into spiritual maturity should be the goal of every Christian. James has not written his letter to condemn us but to reveal to us God's will for the believer. He gives us guidelines and principles for living out what God is working within. What does Philippians 2:13 reveal about God's work in the believer?

- (1.) How does this comfort you?
 - (2.) In what way does this help you accept the instruction of James 4:11a?
2. Most of us recognize failure in the area of James 4:11a, but when we see it in the light of James 4:11b,12, it heightens our awareness of the seriousness of this offense against fellow believers. Explain what we should do when we fail to be obedient to God's command of *loving one another by speaking evil* of another believer. See James 4:7-10
 - (a.) Recognizing the seriousness of this sin in the light of James 4:11,12, how might James 4:9 be an appropriate response?
 3. Recalling the awfulness of the untamable tongue exposed in James 3:8, if you are tempted to *speak evil* of a fellow believer, how will James 4:11,12 help you rein in or bridle that *unruly evil*?
 - a. According to James 1:26 where does the deception that leads to an unbridled tongue take place?
 - (1.) Review and embrace Psalm 19:14 by writing it here as a prayer.
 4. *Love for other believers will root out the weeds of speaking evil about them.* What do you learn about loving one another from:
 - a. I Thessalonians 3:12
 - b. I Thessalonians 4:9,10
 5. Share any insights on James 4:11,12 that you have received through this study.
 6. Take heart if you feel you'll never get it right. Remember God is able. Let this lesson be a "pager" from the Lord that causes you to check in with Him about your motives and words before you speak. Choose a verse as your "pager" number.

*By this shall all men know that you are My disciples,
if you have love one to another.*

- John 13:(34)35