

James Series Going Deeper

5- Day Devotional

Week 12, Day 2: Do Not Speak Evil Against One Another

Primary Verse:

Reading: James 4:11-12; Matthew 7:1-5

Focus Verse:

“The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother...”

James 4:11

Devotional:

James connects two things that we often separate.

He says the one who **speaks against** a brother also **judges** his brother.

That is important because sinful speech is rarely just speech. Our words usually reveal a verdict our heart has already reached.

When I speak evil against someone, I am usually not merely describing what happened. I am placing myself in a position over them. I am declaring what I believe about their motives, their character, their worth, their future, or what they deserve.

That is why sinful speech is so dangerous. It often moves beyond discernment into condemnation.

Discernment says, “This is right, and this is wrong according to God’s Word.”

Sinful judgment says, “I now have the right to stand over you.”

Discernment bows under God’s Word.

Sinful judgment climbs onto God’s throne.

Discernment grieves over sin.

Sinful judgment enjoys exposing it.

Discernment wants restoration.

Sinful judgment wants superiority.

Discernment says, “Brother, I love you too much to leave you here.”

Sinful judgment says, “Let me tell you what is wrong with him.”

This is the same heart Jesus confronts in Matthew 7. Jesus does not forbid all moral evaluation. He is not saying we should never identify sin, never correct a brother, never make wise judgments, and never protect people from evil. In the same chapter, Jesus tells us to recognize false prophets by their fruit.

So Jesus is not forbidding discernment.

He is forbidding hypocritical, self-righteous, condemning judgment.

He says we must first take the log out of our own eye before addressing the speck in our brother's eye. That means before I speak into someone else's life, I must first humble myself before God about my own heart.

That is the posture James is calling us to.

James 4:11 is not calling us to silence in the face of sin. It is calling us to humility in the presence of sin.

A humble person can correct.

A humble person can confront.

A humble person can warn.

A humble person can protect.

A humble person can speak hard truth.

But a humble person does not speak with contempt.

A humble person does not forget his own need for mercy.

A humble person does not enjoy the failure of another.

A humble person does not treat someone's sin as a platform for self-exaltation.

One of the deepest dangers in the Christian life is learning how to say true things with an untrue heart.

We can say biblical things without the heart of Christ.

We can quote Scripture while violating Scripture.

We can defend righteousness while acting unrighteously.

We can call out sin while being blind to our own pride.

James wants us to see that the way we speak about others reveals whether we are living under the law of love or above it.

If my words are full of condemnation, I am not merely talking about another person. I am revealing that I have forgotten my own position before God.

I am also a sinner.

I also need mercy.

I also have blind spots.
I also have needed correction.
I also have been restored by grace.
I also will stand before the Judge.

That does not make sin less serious. It makes humility more necessary.

The church must be a people of truth. But we must be a people who speak truth from beneath the mercy of God, not above other people in pride.

James is teaching us that the issue is not only whether we can see what is wrong in someone else. The deeper issue is whether we can see what is wrong in us when we speak about them.

The proud heart says, "I see their sin."

The humble heart says, "Lord, help me see my own heart before I speak about theirs."

Reflection Questions:

1. **When I speak about someone else's sin or failure, am I grieving, helping, protecting, restoring, or secretly enjoying being right?**
2. **Have I confused biblical discernment with personal condemnation?**
3. **Do I examine my own heart before I speak about someone else's life?**

Action Step:

Think of one person you have recently judged harshly. Pray for them by name today. Ask God to give you truth without pride, love without compromise, and humility without passivity.

Prayer:

Lord, search my heart. Show me where I have judged others from pride instead of love. Teach me the difference between discernment and condemnation. Help me speak truth when truth is needed, but never from arrogance, bitterness, or contempt. Keep me low before You. In Jesus' name, amen.