

James Series Going Deeper

5- Day Devotional

Week 12, Day 3: Speaking Against the Law Instead of Doing the Law

Primary Verse:

Reading: James 1:22-25; James 2:8-13; James 4:11

Focus Verse:

“The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law.”

James 4:11

Devotional:

This is one of the deepest parts of James 4:11.

James says when we speak against a brother or judge a brother, we are not only sinning against that person. We are also speaking against the law and judging the law.

At first, that may sound strange.

How does judging my brother become judging the law?

To understand that, we need to remember what James has already taught.

In James 1:25, he talks about **“the perfect law, the law of liberty.”**

In James 2:8, he talks about the **royal law:**

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

In James 2:12-13, he says we are to speak and act as those who will be judged under the law of liberty, and then he says:

“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

So when James talks about “the law,” he is not merely talking about a cold list of rules. He is talking about the revealed will of God fulfilled in the life and teaching of Christ. He is talking about the way of love, mercy, holiness, humility, truth, and obedience.

God’s law tells us to love our neighbor.

God’s law tells us to speak with wisdom.

God's law tells us to be slow to speak.

God's law tells us to show mercy.

God's law tells us to restore gently.

God's law tells us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

God's law tells us to humble ourselves before the Lord.

So when I speak evil against my brother, I am functionally saying, "That law does not apply right now."

When I slander, I am judging the command to love as unnecessary.

When I condemn, I am judging the command to show mercy as inappropriate.

When I gossip, I am judging the command to be slow to speak as optional.

When I tear someone down, I am judging the command to restore as weaker than my desire to expose.

When I speak from pride, I am judging humility as something I do not currently need.

That is terrifying.

James is saying that sinful speech is not merely breaking the law. It is standing over the law as though I get to decide when it applies.

This connects directly back to James 1:22:

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

In James 1, he warns us not to hear the Word without doing it.

In James 4, he warns us not to judge the Word instead of doing it.

There are only two proper positions before God's Word. We either stand under it as obedient servants, or we stand over it as proud judges.

When I obey the Word, I am saying, "God is Lord, and I am under Him."

When I ignore the Word, edit the Word, excuse myself from the Word, or decide the Word does not apply in this situation, I am placing myself above it.

That is the heart issue in James 4:11.

The sinful heart does not usually say out loud, "I reject God's law."

It says:

“I know I should not say this, but...”

“I know I should forgive, but...”

“I know I should show mercy, but...”

“I know I should go directly to them, but...”

“I know I should be careful with my words, but...”

“I know I should love them, but they do not deserve it.”

That little phrase — **“but”** — can reveal where we are judging the law instead of doing the law.

James is not saying mercy means there are no consequences. He is not saying love means there are no boundaries. He is not saying humility means we pretend sin is not sin.

He is saying we do not get to abandon God’s way in the name of our feelings.

We do not get to speak wickedly because we are hurt.

We do not get to slander because we are angry.

We do not get to condemn because we are right.

We do not get to gossip because we are concerned.

We do not get to ignore love because someone has sinned.

The call of James is clear: be a doer of the law, not a judge of the law.

A doer says, “Lord, Your Word governs my mouth.”

A judge says, “I will decide when Your Word applies.”

A doer says, “Lord, teach me to love my neighbor as myself.”

A judge says, “This person is not worthy of that kind of love.”

A doer says, “Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

A judge says, “Not for them.”

James will not let us live there.

He calls us back to humble obedience.

Reflection Questions:

1. **Where have I acted as though God’s commands about love, mercy, and speech did not apply to me?**
2. **Have I ever used someone else’s sin to excuse my own disobedience?**
3. **Am I living as a doer of the Word or as someone who decides when the Word applies?**

Action Step:

Write down this sentence and keep it before you today: **“God’s Word governs my mouth, even when I am hurt, frustrated, or right.”**

Prayer:

Father, forgive me for the times I have judged Your Word instead of obeying it. Forgive me for acting as though love, mercy, humility, and self-control were optional when I felt justified. Teach me to be a doer of Your Word. Bring my heart, my mouth, and my relationships under Your authority. In Jesus’ name, amen.