

James Series Going Deeper

5- Day Devotional

Week 12, Day 5: Who Are You To Judge Your Neighbor

Primary Verse:

Reading: James 4:11-12; James 2:8-13; Galatians 6:1-2

Focus Verse:

“But who are you to judge your neighbor?”

James 4:12

Devotional:

James ends this section with one of the most humbling questions in the entire letter:

“But who are you to judge your neighbor?”

James is not asking because he needs information.

He is asking to bring us back to reality.

Who are you?

You are not the Lawgiver.

You are not the Judge.

You are not the Savior.

You are not the one who sees all things.

You are not the one who knows every motive.

You are not the one who has final authority.

You are not the one able to save and destroy.

You are a creature before the Creator.

You are a sinner saved by grace.

You are a servant under the Word.

You are a brother or sister in need of mercy.

You are someone who will also stand before God.

That question should humble us.

Not into silence.

Not into fear of speaking truth.

Not into passivity.

Not into compromise.

But into the proper posture.

James wants us to exchange the seat of judgment for the posture of obedience.

The proud person says, “Who are they?”

James says, “Who are you?”

The proud person says, “Do you know what they did?”

James says, “Do you remember who God is?”

The proud person says, “They do not deserve mercy.”

James says, “Are you the One who gets to decide that?”

The proud person says, “I know what should happen to them.”

James says, “There is one Lawgiver and Judge.”

Then James uses the word **neighbor**.

That word is important.

He does not say, “Who are you to judge that problem?”

He does not say, “Who are you to judge that failure?”

He does not say, “Who are you to judge that sinner?”

He says:

“Who are you to judge your neighbor?”

That connects directly back to the royal law in James 2:8:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The person you are tempted to judge is not merely a category. They are not merely a controversy. They are not merely a failure. They are not merely a frustration. They are your neighbor.

And God has already told you what you owe your neighbor.

Love.

Not sentimental love. Not compromising love. Not love that ignores truth. But real biblical love.

Love that tells the truth.

Love that seeks restoration.

Love that refuses slander.

Love that corrects with gentleness.

Love that protects when necessary.

Love that forgives as God commands.

Love that leaves final judgment in the hands of God.

This is where James 4:11-12 becomes deeply practical.

We must learn how to speak truth without pride.

We must learn how to correct without contempt.

We must learn how to confront without condemning.

We must learn how to protect without poisoning.

We must learn how to grieve sin without enjoying someone's downfall.

We must learn how to hold biblical convictions without becoming self-righteous judges.

Galatians 6:1 gives us the posture:

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”

That is the heart.

Restore him.

In a spirit of gentleness.

While keeping watch on yourself.

Why? Because you also can be tempted. You also can fall. You also need grace. You also are dependent on mercy.

The goal of biblical correction is not humiliation. It is restoration.

The goal is not to win an argument. It is to gain a brother.

The goal is not to prove superiority. It is to honor Christ.

The goal is not to destroy. It is to obey the God who alone can save and destroy.

James 4:11-12 is calling the church to become a people whose speech is governed by the gospel.

Because the gospel destroys our pride.

At the cross, I see the seriousness of sin. Sin is so serious that Jesus had to die for it.

But at the cross, I also see the greatness of mercy. Mercy is so great that Jesus willingly died for sinners.

So I cannot minimize sin.

But I also cannot despise sinners.

I cannot pretend rebellion does not matter.

But I also cannot act as though grace is not real.

I cannot abandon truth.

But I also cannot abandon love.

The cross teaches me both.

Truth and mercy meet in Jesus.

Justice and grace meet in Jesus.

Holiness and restoration meet in Jesus.

So when I speak about others, I must speak as someone who has been saved by the mercy of God, not as someone who has earned the right to stand above others.

This is the clearest way to live James 4:11-12:

Stay low before God.

Stay submitted to the Word.

Speak truth with humility.

Refuse slander.

Reject contempt.

Love your neighbor.

Leave final judgment to God.

Because there is only one Lawgiver and Judge.

And He is not calling us to play God with people.

He is calling us to obey God toward people.

Reflection Questions:

1. **Who have I stopped seeing as a neighbor and started seeing mainly as a problem, enemy, failure, or frustration?**
2. **What would it look like to love that person according to God's Word without compromising truth?**
3. **Do my words reflect the cross — both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of mercy?**

Action Step:

Choose one relationship where your heart has become judgmental. Ask God to show you one act of obedience: pray, repent, stop speaking, speak directly, forgive, pursue peace, set a wise boundary, or seek restoration in a biblical way.

Prayer:

Lord, humble me. Remind me who You are and who I am. You are the Lawgiver. You are the Judge. You are able to save and destroy. I am Your servant. Teach me to love my neighbor as myself. Teach me to speak truth without pride, to show mercy without compromise, and to pursue restoration without pretending to be the Savior. In Jesus' name, amen.