

James: Tearing Down or Building Up?

(James 4:11-12)

The Sin of Criticism (v. 11)

- James returns to a milder address with his audience: From “adulterous people” (v. 4) to “brothers & sisters” (v. 11)
- He commands them to stop slandering one another
 - “Speaking evil” (*katalaleite*)
- Slander is a manifestation of the pride that God opposes (4:6; cf. Pro 3:34)
 - It is often connected to jealousy & selfishness (3:14-16; cf. 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1)
 - Along with quarrels (4:1) and double-mindedness (4:8)
- Slander can take on many forms:
 - Questioning legitimate authority
 - Like when the people of Israel “spoke against God and against Moses” (Num 21:5)
 - Slandering someone in secret (Ps 101:5)
 - Bringing false accusations (1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16)
- The reference to the Law is likely to Lev 19:16a
 - By slandering others, we are violating a central principle of God’s Law: Love for our neighbor (Lev 19:18b; cf. Jas 2:8)

The Rightful Judge (v. 12)

- When we speak against others, we take on the role of judge
- This is God’s job, not ours (Isa 33:22)
- Instead, we are to avoid judging others because we do not want to be judged by others (Jas 4:4; Matt 7:1-5)

A Better Way

- Words are tools
- Rather than tearing down others with our words, we are called to build them up (Eph 4:29)
- Encouragement is one of the most effective ways to show someone we love them and is desperately needed (1 Thess 5:11)
 - Words of Encouragement

So What?

- Are we tearing down or building up with our words?
- Are we loving others through our words?

Meditation Verse: *Ephesians 4:29*