

## James 4:11-17

The basic sin of all mankind is the desire to be our own god. It may come in the form of:

- Wanting to direct our own life
- Indulging in sin
- Making all of our choices
- Disregarding what the Bible teaches
- Expressed directly as the new agers do when they proclaim themselves a god
- Disobedience to Scripture
- All sins proceed out of the desire to be our own god

One of the recurring themes of James is that those who have been born again have been drastically changed down to the core of their being; **James 1:18b** “...a new birth by the message of truth...” and they have a strong desire to obey the will of God in their life.

A true believer desires to pray according to the model prayer in **Matthew 6:10** “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

### I. Playing God with Others (Vs. 11-12)

The words translated “*speak evil*” is one word in the Greek (kataloleō) it means to “cast against” with slander, mindless, thoughtless, careless, derogatory, untrue speech toward another. The Scripture often condemns this kind of speech directed toward others – **Leviticus 19:16** “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people...” **Psalms 101:5a** “Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy ...” **Proverbs 6:16-19** “<sup>16</sup> These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: <sup>17</sup> A lying tongue, <sup>19</sup> “A false witness who speaks lies.”

**James 4:11** “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law.” Does the admonition to not judge another mean that we are never to say anything negative or critical about another person? Jesus said in **Matthew 7:1** “Judge not, that you be not judged.”

What Jesus had in mind in **Matthew 7:1** is a more negative meaning of “judge.” In the context, Jesus was speaking about self-righteous, hypocritical, egotistical, unmerciful judging of someone else by one’s own sense of self-righteousness. In the context of the verse in James it is speaking of an attitude or an approach of harshly criticizing or condemning.

**In summary**, to say that another person is wrong about something that the Bible says is wrong is not judging; it is simply applying the Scripture. However, the judgment forbidden in the text in James and other places in the Scriptures includes judging a person’s motives.

**1 Kings 8:39b** “...for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men.” In **Matthew 7:1-6** Jesus said we should examine our heart and “remove the beam from our eye” before we judge another. Only when after examining our motives and soul searching and we’ve gotten all the facts, we must declare as wrong another’s words and actions when ... those words and actions violate Scripture. When confronting wrong, the principle of **Ephesians 4:15** must rule, “... but, speaking the truth in love...” To keep things in perspective **Philippians 2:3** “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” To slander is putting others down often make us look superior. James has just told us in **James 4:10** to “humble ourselves” so to speak evil of another is rooted in pride, not humility.

Be very careful even in idle conversation what is said about another, and especially about a brother or sister in Christ. Listen to Proverbs as it describes 7 things the Lord hates. In **Proverbs 6:16** one of the things the Lord hates is, “one who sows discord among brethren.” When we make judgments, we are taking God’s place as it identifies in **James 4:12**. “There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”

### II. Playing God with Ourselves (Vs.13-17)

To reiterate, one of the evidences of being a true Christian is that we desire to do God’s will; **Psalms 40:8** “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.”

## James 4:11-17

### A. The Proudful Attitude (Vs.13)

What is rebuked in verse 13 is his self-sufficient attitude that just leaves God out of our daily life. Have we learned that the starting point of all our planning is the recognition of, and submission to, the sovereignty of God? This entire scenario in vs. 13 is of pride. He is even sure that he is going to make a profit because he knows what he is doing and he is in control. The business person that James is describing has a proudful attitude of self-sufficiency. In **Luke 12:16-21** Jesus gave an illustration about a wealthy farmer who “gained the world but lost his soul.”

### B. A Presumptuous Assumption (Vs. 14-15)

James gives us two reasons that those who leave God out of their plans and life are rebuked. First is the presumptuous assumption is that we have tomorrow. Second, those who leave God out of their plans and life are rebuked because of the brevity of life, **1 Samuel 20:3b** “... there is but a step between me and death.”

**Vs. 14** – James compares our lives here to a vapor. That is translated, “a mist” and “a bit of smoke.” **1 Chronicles 29:15b** “Our days on earth are as a shadow...” **Job 7:6a** “My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle...” **Psalms 102:3a** “For my days are consumed like smoke...” Near death experiences are not the closest we are to death. Right now is the closest we’ve ever been to death! Anyone can die at any time.

As Christians, instead of living similar to atheists (i.e. operating our daily lives as if God does not exist), James says that everything we do is in the atmosphere of submission to the will of God.

**Vs. 15** – “*If the Lord wills*” means that we acknowledge God’s sovereignty and submit to His sovereign will in all our planning. In the earlier days of Christianity, Christians would add the postscript to their letters, D.V. These initials stand for the Latin words *Deo Volente* which mean “*if the Lord wills*” or “*God willing*.”

Apostle Paul lived by the “if God wills” approach, **Acts 18:21** “*but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus.*” Again, the Apostle Paul said, **1 Corinthians 4:19** “*But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills...*”

### C. A Presumptuous Arrogance (Vs.16)

In verses 13-14 God’s will is just ignored. James is addressing those who deny God’s will by substituting their will for God’s. Substituting our will over God’s will is translated with the word “trespasses” as used in the model prayer in **Matthew 6:12**. It is a sin at the next level to boast about our plans and successes when we know that we are not in God’s will. Our arrogance is in saying my will is better than God’s will.

### D. A Presumptuous Omission (Vs.17)

There are sins of commission (doing what we should not do) and sins of omission (failing to do what we know is God’s will for us.) The sin of omission brings strong consequences from God (**Luke 12:47-48**). The Christian life is all about letting God be God in all the daily details of life, big or small. Don’t be guilty of living like the world, leaving God out. God’s will for His children is described in **Romans 12:2b** as “...*that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*”

### Application:

1. What are the circumstances that cause me to “*speak evil of*” or “*judge*” another?
2. What can I do to prompt my awareness of thoughts that lead me to speak evil of or judge another?
3. What are the conditions that lead me to do my own will versus seeking and doing God’s will in my life?
4. What steps will I take to yield to God’s will in my life?