

James 4: Words Which Betray Maturity

James 4:11-12

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1. The author, James, wants us to take a hard look at what we say and why we say it. Sometimes the words we use, even if they sound wise, reveal pride in our hearts.
2. James isn't saying that we can never say something negative, instead we should consider our motives. We should check that we are helping not hurting and correcting with humility.
3. The Greek word used means to "speak down" on someone, either in slander, or truth that is delivered in a way that tears down. This type of speech is intended to inflict damage and make us superior.
4. We must make the distinction between judgment and discernment. We are always allowed to discern if something is wise or not, and we're expected to use God's Word and discern if something is sinful or good.
5. Criticism that feeds pride opposes God's call to humility.
6. When we judge wrongly, we act like we're God. We're saying that we know better than God and that's not just pride, it's identity fraud.
7. Correction should be made lovingly as friends, not enemies.
8. Where we see need in others, we are to tend to it as though it were our own need. This is how Jesus loves us.
9. If we find ourselves rising above our stations, or growing in pride, the only cure is to see God as He rightly is.
10. The Gospel is our anchor and when we confess we aren't enough, but that Jesus is, we are rooted in salvation through Christ.

GREEK & HEBREW WORDS

Katalaléo [to speak against, speak evil]

QUOTES

“A defamatory word may be perfectly true: we do not have to tell lies in order to defame. But the fact that it is true gives us no right to say it. True or false, it makes us superior to the other person so that, even the very form of James’ verb suggests, we ‘talk down’ to them, ourselves adopting a superior position.”

- J.A. Motyer

“It is the part of vile men to vilify others and to climb up to unmerited praise by the stairs of another’s disgrace”

- Thomas Adams

TODAY'S WORSHIP

Only A Holy God
Great Is Thy Faithfulness
O Praise The Name (Anastasis)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Personal Reflection: Can you think of a time when someone's words made you feel "talked down to," diminished, or dehumanized? How did it affect you?

Understanding the Text: James 4 describes an audience dealing with quarrels, conflicts, and envy. How does this context help us understand what James means by "Do not speak against [or 'down on'] one another"?

Heart Issues: James emphasizes we're all "brethren" - family members with the same status before God. How should remembering our shared identity as sinners saved by grace change the way we speak about other Christians?

Practical Application: How should this passage shape the way we handle disagreements or concerns within the church? What's the difference between biblical correction and sinful criticism?

Going Deeper: James refers to "love your neighbor as yourself" as the "royal law" in 2:8. Why does speaking against others violate this command? How does Jesus' love for us model how we should love others?

Personal Response: Kyle ends by pointing to the Gospel - that "you are not enough but Jesus IS." How does remembering the Gospel help us avoid the pride that leads to sinful criticism?

Closing Challenge: Consider sharing one practical way you want to change your speech patterns based on this study. How can the group support and encourage each other in this area?