

James 4:11 - 5:9

Day 1

Slander. Read James 4:11-12

1. What specific problem with the tongue did James focus on in 4:11a? (Cross-ref. 1:26; 3:9) Who was he addressing?

2. Underline what the following say about slander.

- Titus 3:2 Remind the people...to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. NIV
- Proverbs 10:18 Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool.
- Mark 7:21-23 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” NIV
- Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, outcry and slander, along with every form of malice.

FYI: Slander Strong's NT:2635 *katalaleo*; to be a traducer, i.e. to slander: KJV - speak against (evil of)

“Literally the command is ‘Do not speak down on one another’ or ‘Do not speak against one another, brethren’ (NASB). Slander is malicious speech that is untrue. But the command here forbids any speech (whether it is true or false) which runs down another person.”
- R. Kent Hughes (194)

Food for Thought: “This destructive speaking down against others can also manifest itself in the subtle art of minimizing another's virtues and accomplishments. After being with such people, your mental abilities, athletic accomplishments, musical skills and domestic virtues seem not to be quite as good as they were a few minutes earlier. Some of this feeling came, perhaps, from their words about your Steinway – ‘What a nice little piano’ – and surprised exclamations about what you didn't know. It was also the tone of the voice, the cast of the eye, and the surgical silences.”
- R. Kent Hughes (195)

3. What else do we speak against and judge when we slander? 4:11b (Compare 2:9)

- What law are we speaking against? Leviticus 19:16-18

FYI: Judge Strong's NT:2919 *krino*; properly, to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish

“When we have proper humility before God, it just isn't within us to arrogantly judge our brother ‘This is not to rule out civil courts and judges. Instead, it is to root out the harsh, unkind, critical spirit that continually finds fault with others.’ (Burdick)”
- David Guzik

4. In what sense do you think we are judging the law (of love) if we don't keep it? 4:11c

Food for Thought: “However high and orthodox our view of God's law might be, a failure actually to do it says to the world that we do not *in fact* put much store by it.”
- Douglas Moo (152)

5. In addition to speaking against our brother and the law, who are we setting ourselves above? 4:12a

Digging Deeper

What example did Jesus give? 1 Peter 2:23

FYI: "Only God has the right to judge! Therefore, for us to judge one of His creatures is to usurp a right that only God has. Thus judgmentalism is not only arrogant but blasphemous."
– Charles Swindoll (198)

6. What would James' question in 4:12b cause someone to consider? See Matthew 7:1-4

FYI: "This charge shows that James is not prohibiting the proper, and necessary, discrimination that every Christian should exercise. Nor is he forbidding the right of the community to exclude from its fellowship those it deems to be in flagrant disobedience to the standards of the faith, or to determine right and wrong among its members. (1 Corinthians 5 and 6). James' concern is with jealous, censorious speech by which we condemn others as being wrong in the sight of God."
– Douglas Moo (152)

7. What did Paul say about judging? Romans 14:10-13

- How does this differ from the kind of judging talked about in Ephesians 5:6-12

FYI: "James isn't suggesting that we be gullible and permissive, letting people get away with anything. Remember, in his own letter James confronts fellow Christians about their sins. But there's a difference between confrontation for the purpose of building up and condemnation for the purpose of tearing down."
– Charles Swindoll

8. What are examples of things that can make our judging flawed and lead to misunderstandings or false impressions?

- How well does God judge? 1 Corinthians 4:5

Applying the Word: *Have you ever been misjudged or have you ever misjudged another person? To what did that lead?*

How big a difference do you see between judging a person versus judging what a person says or does? How can we "hate the sin but love the sinner"?

Day 2

Arrogance. Read James 4:13-17

9. How would you describe the attitude expressed in the (*when, where, what and why*) plans that the person makes in 4:13? What do they think they can control?

FYI: listen/Come now Strong's NT:3568 *nun*; now "For emphasis in commands and exhortations implying that what is to be done should be done now, at once, on the spot." - The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"There are two great certainties about things that shall come to pass – one is that God knows, and the other is that we do not know.' (Spurgeon)... 'This uncertainty of life is not a cause either for fear or inaction. It is always a reason for realizing our complete dependence on God.' (Moffatt)" - David Guzik

"The problem here is not the plan or the concept of planning; it is leaving God out of the plan (v. 15)" - The Nelson Study Bible (2110)

"The first century was a period of great commercial activity, and especially the Hellenistic cities of Palestine...were heavily involved in commerce of various kinds. Many Jews were active in these business comings-and-goings; large numbers had settle in cities throughout the Mediterranean world for commercial reasons." - D. Moo (154)

10. What kind of control do we actually have? 4:14

- To what did James compare life? 4:14b (See also 1:11)

11. Underline what life is compared to in the following verses.

- Psalm 39:5 "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah .NAS
- Psalm 78:39 He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return. NIV
- Psalm 102:3 For my days vanish like smoke, and my bones burn like glowing embers. BSB
- Psalm 102:11 My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. NIV
- Job 9:25,26 "My days are swifter than a runner...They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey. NIV

12. What view of life should we have? 4:15 See Acts 18:21
(See David's prayer in Psalm 39:4.)

Digging Deeper
See Jesus' parable about making plans. Luke 12:16-21

Food for Thought: "If the Lord wills means submitting ourselves humbly before the one true God who is entitled to be Lord of all things in our lives, not just a few things. It means erasing from our minds the sacred-secular, heavenly-earthly, spiritual-physical dicotomies that delegate some things to God and some to us. God governs all things even the 'mundane' daily decisions. He owns it all...When we stand in judgment over our brothers and sisters in Christ, we're playing the part of divine judge. And when we plan our lives as if God were uninterested or uninvolved, we're playing the part of divine Lord." - Charles Swindoll (99,100)

"This uncertainty of life is not a cause either for fear or inaction. It is always a reason for realizing our complete dependence on God.' (Moffatt)" - David Guzik

13. Underline what determines the length of our life.

- Psalm 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. NIV
- Job 12:10 For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being. NLT
- Job 14:5 You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer. NLT

14. By making these claims, what were people doing? 4:16 (See Proverbs 27:1)

FYI: "The problem with this boasting is that they are claiming to have the future under control when, in fact, it is God who holds time in his hands. These are empty claims...Boasting about the future is arrogant because God is the only one who knows what will happen in the future. Such arrogance is the opposite of humility (v. 10)." - Lyman Coleman (50,51)

15. How did James describe sin in 4:17? (Cross-ref. 2:17) How does this differ from what we usually think of as sin?

Digging Deeper

Look back over James. In what other situations had pride manifested itself and created problems?

FYI: "Sins of **omission** (failing to do what God wants us to do) are sins just as surely as sins of **commission** (doing what God has told us not to do). Although eight of the ten commandments *forbid* specific acts, two of them (commandments four and five) *require* certain specific acts." - Henry Morris

Applying the Word: How conscientiously or consistently do you think about God's control over your life in the decisions and plans you make? When have your plans been completely disrupted?

Day 3

Warning to the Rich Oppressors. Read James 5:1-6

16. Whom did James address in 5:1 and what did he urge them to do? (See Isaiah 13:6)

- What warning did James give them? 5:1b

FYI: James 5:1-6 "are most likely addressed to unbelievers. These people are not called brothers...James is not necessarily condemning wealth here; instead, he focuses on the sinful use of wealth." - David Platt

17. What happens to stored material possessions? 5:2,3a (Compare Matthew 6:19-21,24)

- How would be the consequences of this “hoarded” wealth? 5:3b (See Romans 2:5)

FYI: “Wealth in those days consisted of both money and such commodities as grain, oil, and costly garments... Thus it was the commodities that had rotted and the stored garments that had been invaded by moths... The tragic fact was that the rich had hoarded so much food and clothing that it was going to waste. Their crime was uncontrolled greed that resulted in oppression of the poor (v. 4).

Their corrosion will testify against you. It witnessed to the greed and selfishness of these wicked men, who had far more than they could ever use, while their workers were deprived of their wages. The idea that the corrosion will eat the flesh of the rich ‘like fire’ is a graphic way of declaring that their greed will result in their own destruction, as if the corrosion that ate their riches actually will eat their very flesh. James’s statement that the rich had ‘hoarded wealth in the last days’ shows that he had the future judgment in mind.”

- Expositors Bible Commentary

5:2,3 “Riches provide no spiritual benefit in the present nor do they give grounds for hope at the judgment.”

- James Moo (161)

18. Underline problems connected with money.

- Ecclesiastes 5:10 Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. NIV
 - Mark 4:18,19 The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. NLT
 - I Timothy 6:9,10 9 But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the **love of** money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. NLT
- From the above verses, what do you find convicting or surprising?

19. What was another charge against these rich? 5:4a

- Who hears the cries of the oppressed? 5:4b (See Ex. 3:7,8)
How ominous was this warning? Rev. 11:17,18

Digging Deeper

See the commands the Lord gave about wages: Deuteronomy 24:14-15; Leviticus 19:13

FYI: Look/behold Strong’s NT:2400 *idou*; “demonstrative particle, ‘Lo and behold!’, serving to call attention to something external or exterior to oneself”
- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

You failed to pay – “This was a heinous crime for two reasons. First, the poverty-stricken workers were living hand-to-mouth, and a day without wages was a day without food! Second, the owners were doing this at harvest time when their barns were full.”
- R. Kent Hughes (216)

Lord Almighty – “Literally the Lord of hosts, i.e., the commander of the heavenly armies.” – Lyman Coleman

20. What is the next rebuke James made? 5:5 *What picture does “fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter” give? In his effort to correct rich oppressors, why do you think James used such harsh imagery?*

FYI: Nourished/fattened Strong's NT:5142 *trepho*; properly, to stiffen, i.e. fatten (by implication, to cherish [with food, etc.], pamper, rear

“The Greek text says that they had fattened their hearts. The heart is viewed as desiring luxury and pleasure, and the rich are pictured as giving their hearts everything they desired. The ‘day of slaughter’ is a designation of the day of judgment ([Jer 12:3](#))....On the very day when judgment was due to come, they were fattening themselves, like cattle completely unaware of their impending destruction.” - Expositor's Bible Commentary

21. What is the concluding rebuke James made? 5:6 (Cross-ref 4:2) Do you think James is speaking figuratively or literally?

- Historically, what had often been done to the people? Jeremiah 22:13,17

FYI: “James is referring to judicial ‘murder’ – primarily referring to taking away the means of making a living. The landed gentry controlled the courts. The poor could not oppose them because they had no way to use the system, and thus were helpless.” - R. Kent Hughes (218)

“Strikingly, one commentator explained, ‘In the Jewish world, to deprive a person of their support was the same as murdering them’ (Blomberg and Kamell, James, 225).” - David Platt

22. What did Paul say about riches in 1 Timothy 6:17-19?

23. What are true riches?

- Ephesians 1:18 having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, ASV
- Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! NIV
- Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; ASV
- Colossians 2:2,3 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. NIV
- Proverbs 22: The reward for humility and fearing the Lord is riches and honor and life.
 - How would you summarize the meaning of true riches?

Applying the Word: *How content are you with the material possessions you have? Do you see any excesses in your life?*

Day 4

Patience. Read James 5:7-9

24. What group did James address in 5:7a? (Contrast 5:1) What did he tell them to do even in light of the injustices and suffering they were going through? (Cross-ref. 1:2,3)
25. Who did James give as an example of patient waiting? 5:7b List the things that a farmer has to wait for. *(As he waits, how much control does he have? In what does he have to trust? How do you see this apply to those who are waiting for justice?)*

FYI: "In Palestine the early rains came in October and November soon after the grain was sown, and the latter rains came in April and May as the grain was maturing. Both rainy seasons were necessary for a successful crop. Knowing this, the farmer was willing to wait patiently until both rains came and provided the needed moisture."
- Expositor's Bible Commentary

26. What command did James give in addition to patience? 5:8 (See Psalm 37:7-9)

FYI: *stand firm/take courage/strengthen/establish your hearts* Strong's NT:4741 *sterizo*; to set fast, i.e. (literally) to turn resolutely in a certain direction, or (figuratively) to confirm

"Even though a great majority of Christian believers in every nation are among those of whom the rich have taken unjust advantage, the Lord would advise prayerful patience rather than rebellion and retribution. He will make all things right when He comes in judgment."
- Henry Morris

27. Underline how we can be strong and stand firm. *(Put an asterisk by the command that means the most to you.)*
- Psalm 55:22 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. NIV
 - Ephesians 6:10,11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. NAS
 - Philippians 4:6,7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. NIV

28. What else did James warn against? 5:9 How do you picture grumbling? How would you link that with patience? See Ephesians 4:2,3

- What do we need to remember? 5:9b
- What is the problem when we grumble against others? Luke 6:41,42

FYI: Grumble Strong's NT:4727 *stenazo*; to make (be) in straits, i.e. (by implication) to sigh, murmur, pray inaudibly: KJV - *with grief, groan, grudge, sigh*.

"Grumbling can easily develop in a tough situation in which people cannot easily vent their frustrations at those causing the problem, so the frustration is directed at those who are around them." - Lyman Coleman (59)

29. Note the references to the "last days" and the "Lord's coming" in 5:3,7,8,9b. What does this indicate about an expectation at this time?

FYI: last days: "The application of this expression to their own time testified to the early Christians' belief that they were living in that era when God's promises were coming to fulfillment; an era of indefinite duration immediately preceding the climax of history." - Douglas Moo (162)

The apostles and Paul's early letters often referred to the Lord's coming as "near/at hand/the time is short" (Romans 13:11,12; 1 Corinthians 7:29; 10:11; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:18).

- Some believe the apostles were in error.
- Others say that "near" is a relative term (2 Peter 3:8) or the meaning is *figurative* (Philippians 4:5).
- Still others believe that the possibility of Jesus' second coming and setting up the millennial kingdom was offered (Acts 3:19,20) and could have occurred at that time if the nation of Israel had believed (Acts 28:27,28).

30. How should anticipation of the Lord's coming affect our lives?
2 Peter 3:10-14

Digging Deeper

See events that will happen in the "last days." Acts 2:17-21

Applying the Word: Think of a situation that demands patient waiting on your part. What lesson from the farmer can you apply to this?

When do you find yourself most prone to grumbling? Instead of grumbling, what constructive things could you do?

Memory verse: If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. James 4:17 NIV