

## James

### Lesson #15, Chapter 4:11-17

Please read all of Chapter 4 before beginning this lesson. And as you do so, ask the Lord for His help in studying and applying this life-transforming Word to your life.

1. As we've discovered in previous lessons, at times James appears to make rather large subject leaps only to observe that the "leaps" really do follow with all he's been saying. Our lesson today begins in that same way. How does the command in verse 11 fall in line with verses 1-10?
2. What command is given in verse 11? What are some specific ways we put this sin into practice?
3. To whom is the command addressed? Why is this important to remember?
4. It's easy to see the Scriptures have much to say on this subject, so let's start by summarizing what you learn about engaging in this sin from the following verses. See Exodus 23:1; Psalm 50:20; 101:5; Proverbs 10:18; Romans 1:30; Ephesians 4:31; 1 Timothy 3:11; James 5:9; 1 Peter 2:1.
5. Let's get back to looking at the rest of James' comments. What argument in verses 11 and 12 does James present for speaking well of each other?
6. How does James tie in previous instruction with what he says here in verses 11 and 12? See James 1:22-23; 2:8-12; 3:10.

7. What do you learn in verses 11 and 12 that show how serious this sin is to God? Also explain *why* it's offensive to Him.
  
8. Matthew Henry eloquently reminds us, "Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice. This, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, *that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness* (Prov. 31:26), must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian."<sup>1</sup> How would a firm commitment to not to speak evil of anyone change our interactions with each other?
  - a. How should we respond if someone reminds us not to defame someone?
  
  - b. What are some ways we can lovingly help someone else not to speak badly of someone else?

"This is a much-needed warning. People are slow to realize that there are few sins which the Bible so unsparingly condemns as the sin of irresponsible and malicious gossip. There are few activities in which the average person finds more delight than this; to tell and to listen to the slanderous story—especially about some famous person—is for most people a fascinating activity. We do well to remember what God thinks of it." William Barclay<sup>2</sup>

"*Speak not evil one of another*, because you are brethren. The compellation, as used by the apostle here, carries an argument along with it. Since Christians are brethren, they should not defile nor defame one another. It is required of us that we be tender of the good name of our brethren; where we cannot speak well, we had better say nothing than

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2417.

<sup>2</sup>William Barclay, [\*The Letters of James and Peter\*](#), 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 128–129.

“speak evil; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, merely to expose them, nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve, and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading things concerning them of which they are altogether innocent.” Matthew Henry<sup>3</sup>

9. What situation does James address in verse 13?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. We know God doesn't condemn planning or working hard (see Proverbs 20:18; 31:10-21; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12), so what attitudes and motivations is James going after in verse 14? See also Proverbs 27:1; Isaiah 56:12; Luke 12:17-21.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What attitudes does God desire to see His children possess when it comes to living out their lives? Consider our text, along with Psalm 39:4-5; 90:10, 12, 14-17; Matthew 6:34; Luke 12:22-34.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. According to verse 15, what is the antidote to the thinking found in verses 13-14?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. Describe what our daily lives look like when we live like verse 15.
  - a. What are our *thoughts* or *motivations* like when we live the *James 4:15 way*? See also Proverbs 3:5-8; 19:21; Matthew 6:9-10, 33; John 3:30; Romans 1:10; Hebrews 6:3.

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<sup>3</sup>Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2417.

- b. What word or phrase would you use to describe this kind of life?
  
- c. How much would you say that word or phrase characterized you this week?

“The true Christian way is not to be terrorized into fear and paralyzed into inaction by the uncertainty of the future, but to commit the future and all our plans into the hands of God, always remembering that these plans may not be within God’s purpose.” William Barclay<sup>4</sup>

- 14. How does God view our independence according to verse 16?
  
- 15. List the Scripture verses or passages *you* go to that encourage and remind you *to live dependently upon the Lord*. Be sure to explain why that particular passage strengthens your heart.
  
- 16. Explain how if we don’t live the James 4:15 way, it will result in the sins of verse 16.
  
- 17. What else do we learn about boasting from the following verses? See Isaiah 10:15; 47:7-8, 10; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 4:6-7; 13:4; 1 John 2:16.

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<sup>4</sup>William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 132.

18. Douglas Moo, in his commentary on James writes, “Phillips<sup>5</sup> perfectly captures the resultant meaning, ‘you get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence’. It is this ‘pride of life’, this arrogant sense of self-sufficiency and self-importance, that John deplores as characteristic of the world (1 John 2:16; see also Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:4). People not only leave God out of account in planning their lives; it is the essence of sin that they brag about it as well—‘I’ takes centre stage in place of God. This kind of boasting is *evil*, then, not because of the arrogant manner in which it is done; it is evil because the objects of the boasting are instances of arrogant disregard for God.”<sup>6</sup> Douglas Moo reveals how subtly our sins of independence and self-sufficiency can lead us to think they aren’t really being noticed. What are some specific ways you can train your heart to live more dependently upon the Lord, knowing He does see our sins?
  
19. How does James wrap up his counseling session that has focused on practical ways to live dependently upon the Lord? See verse 17.
  
20. Explain how the seeds of self-sufficiency and independence wend their way through verses 11-17.
  
21. What choice does the straightforward counsel from verse 17 force us to make?
  
22. What does our “choice,” either of dependence or self-sufficiency, proclaim to the Lord? Review what we’ve seen in verses 11-17.

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<sup>5</sup>J. B. Phillips translator of *The New Testament in Modern English*, 1958.

<sup>6</sup>Douglas J. Moo, [\*James: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 162.