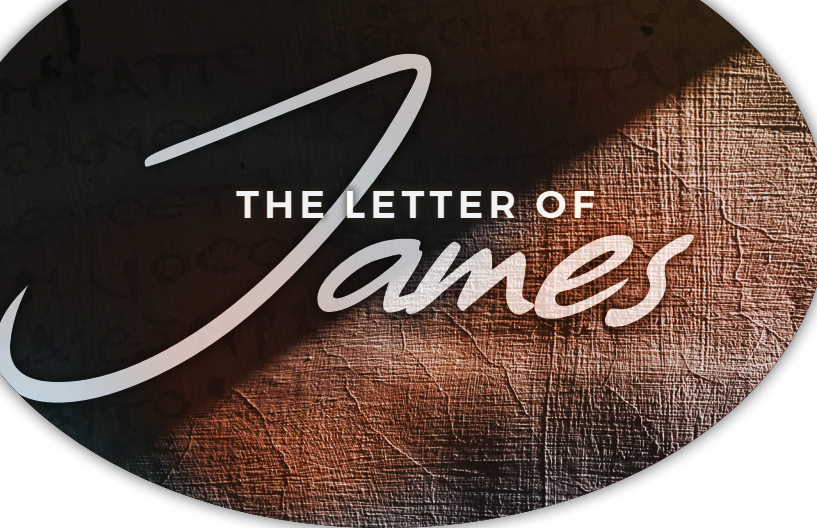




THE LETTER OF *James*

OCTOBER 25, 2026

Applied Humility! JAMES 4:11-12

The literary style of James is characterized by “frequent and apparently abrupt transitions from one subject to another; and equally unexpected returning to matters already discussed.” James has already called believers to repentance, cleansing, and to live in humility. In chapter 4, verses 11-12, he now applies his call to the very real situation in the early church and issues the command: “stop speaking against one another.”

The central issue is not simply how we speak about others, but what our speech reveals about our attitude toward God’s law and authority. When we take seriously the challenge of God’s royal law (James 2:8), we will be less inclined to judge our neighbors and more likely to love them.

Peter taught that when the truth about a fellow believer is harmful, one should cover it in love rather than repeat it in criticism. “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8 (NASB95)

Key thought: We are called to obey God’s law, not stand above it; to love our neighbors, not slander them; and to exercise humility, remembering that God alone is the ultimate Judge.

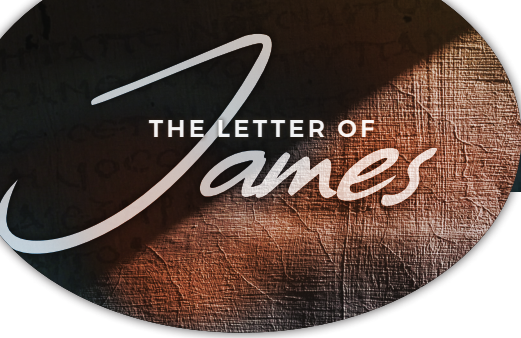
1. Command — “Do not speak against one another” (v. 11a)

James gives a direct command. The expression “speak against” carries the idea of speaking evil of someone, slandering them, or speaking in a way that damages their reputation.

“You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.” Leviticus 19:16 (NASB95)

Before speaking about another person, we should ask: *Is what I am saying true? Is it necessary? Am I seeking restoration, or am I trying to damage this person’s reputation?*

We must not confuse speaking truth to correct sin with speaking evil to tear someone down.



2. Clarification — “Brethren” (v. 11a)

The word brethren remind us that Christians belong to the same spiritual family. We are not merely people who attend the same church; we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

That makes slander among believers especially destructive. When we speak maliciously about another Christian, we are speaking against someone whom God has called us to love.

Consider these passages: (John 13:34-35; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:29)

The question is not merely, *“Am I right about this person’s failure?”* It is also, *“Am I responding in a way that honors Christ?”*

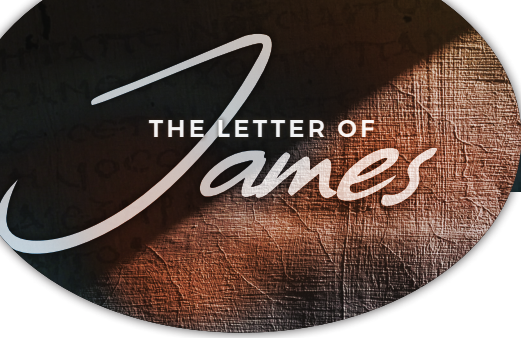
3. Consideration — “He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law” (v. 11b)

Why is speaking against a brother so serious? Because the person who slanders or improperly judges another is not merely committing an offense against that individual. He is also disregarding the law of God.

The law commands us to love our neighbor. When we condemn, malign, or slander another person, we place ourselves in opposition to that command. (James 2:8; Matthew 22:37-39; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18)

There is an important distinction here: James is not forbidding every form of discernment or correction. He is condemning the sinful judgment that puts us in opposition to God’s law.

Jesus Himself taught that we should make righteous judgments (John 7:24), while also warning against hypocritical judgment (Matthew 7:1–5).



4. Clarification — “But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it” (v. 11c)

There are two contrasting positions:

- **A doer of the law:** Someone who humbly submits to God’s commands and seeks to obey them.
- **A judge of the law:** Someone who presumes to stand above God’s commands, as though he has the authority to determine their validity or application on his own terms.

James is exposing the pride behind sinful criticism. Rather than humbly obeying God’s command to love our neighbor, we may assume the role of judge and condemn another person.

5. Comment (the reason) — “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge” (v. 12a)

James now brings the argument to its conclusion: God alone possesses the ultimate authority to give the law and judge humanity.

- A. God is the Lawgiver
- B. God is the Judge
- C. God is able to save and to destroy

When we are tempted to condemn another person, we should remember that we are accountable to the same sovereign God. We must exercise discernment according to Scripture while leaving ultimate judgment to the Lord.

6. Confrontation — “But who are you who judge your neighbor?” (v. 12b)

This question brings the entire passage down to a personal level. James does not ask whether our neighbor has faults. He asks who we are to assume this position of judgment.

We are not omniscient; we do not know all the facts.
We are not perfectly righteous; we have our own sins and weaknesses.
We are not the Lawgiver; God’s standards are not ours to invent.
We are not the final Judge; that authority belongs to God.

Instead of asking, “What is wrong with that person?” we should also ask, “Am I responding to that person in obedience to God?”

Take away:

The passage calls us to three practical responses:

- 1. Guard your speech.** Do not slander, malign, or speak maliciously against others.
- 2. Examine your heart.** Do not place yourself above God's Word while condemning someone else.
- 3. Remember God's authority.** He alone is the Lawgiver and the ultimate Judge, and we must approach others with humility.

A fitting question: *Am I spending more time judging the failures of others than examining my own obedience to God?*