

1. **Introduction**: In 3:13-18 James contrasted people who are wise in their own eyes with those who have wisdom from above. In 4:1-10, he showed how quarrels and conflicts grow out of envious ambition.
 - In 4:11-12, he says, if we judge our brothers or speak evil against them, we come perilously close to pretending to be God. God knows all circumstances. We don't.
2. **James 4:11-12**: *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?*
 - Speaking against a brother or sister “in Christ” may take the form of slander, gossip, or a complaint. Believers are not to repeat gossip nor initiate it.
 - Slander means to defame someone’s reputation by presenting misrepresentations or charges known to be false.
 - Gossip is casual conversation or reports about other people that may or may not be true but are almost always lacking in confirming evidence.
 - Believers are forbidden to either gossip about or slander a person.
 - Jesus said believers are permitted to judge people “by their fruits,” that is by words and actions, but unable to see into hearts cannot judge their moral essence.
 - Judge rightly based on external observable actions. The Bible speaks against self-serving, malicious judgment, but encourages wise, righteous discernment.
3. **John 7:24**: *“Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”*
4. **Matthew 7:4-5**: *Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*
 - If we think we know something bad about a person’s behavior that we personally believe to be true, Matthew 18:15-17 tells us what we are to do.
 - Confirm to the best of your ability that what you think you know is true and then follow the rules of God’s guidance on dealing with problems with others (Matthew 18). The first step is to go to them offering spiritual and physical help as appropriate.
 - If appropriate and needed can then follow through the Matthew 18 process.
 - Otherwise, we are to say nothing unless testimony is legally necessary or speaking is necessary to keep someone else from harm.
 - We are to regard other believers as brothers and sisters in Christ, as joint heirs of salvation. All were dead in trespasses and sins, including each of us.

- All were saved by the same precious blood sacrifice even though all deserved God’s wrath. How could we dare defame a fellow believer, one for whom Christ died?
 - ***“There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”***
 - James says to regard other believers as neighbors under the royal law (love your neighbor as yourself).
 - We know our own sin and unworthiness before God. But for God’s grace, we would yet be dead in sins. God will judge others.
5. **Wisdom from above versus worldly wisdom:** As we have seen, the two categories are in opposition to one another. Wisdom from above is opposed by worldly wisdom.
- Worldly wisdom creeps into minds and hearts through daily contact with the world.
 - Both categories of wisdom exist in our hearts and struggle against one another. For believers to be controlled by wisdom from above, they are to always submit to God, study His Word, and pray that His wisdom will direct their path.
 - In 4:11-12, James considered the perils of acting as though we are assigned the duty of judging the life of others.
 - In 4:13-16, James considers the problem of acting as though we are the final authority over our life, the master of all we think, say, or do.
6. **James 4:13-16:** *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*
- From the tone, these comments relate to an important issue. The issue is, “who has authority over the details of our life?”
 - Notice how James describes people acting as if they are the supreme master of their life – choose a goal (establish a profitable business), set a schedule (begin today or tomorrow), choose a location (a specific city), set a time limit (success in a year).
 - None of these things is negative in and of itself. Nothing evil about planning ahead, setting schedules, engaging in business, or making a profit.
 - These actions are ordinary and OK. Yet, because God is our sovereign Lord, we are to consider His will in all aspects of our life and recognize He is in control, not us.
 - James’ concern is the problem of falling into a way of thinking that habitually ignores “the sovereignty of God.” Acting as though we know for certain that the outcome of our plans will be exactly what we planned is presumptuous.

- It is presumptuous because it assumes we are in total control of our life and that what we choose to do will happen according our will when we want it to happen.
 - James says that making such presumptuous statements is arrogant boasting. It is evil because it ignores the truth that it is God who is sovereign and in control, not us.
 - We have no clue what the future will bring, not even if we will live to see tomorrow.
 - We have no assurance of a long life. We are frail, here today and possibly gone tomorrow, totally dependent on God.
 - When we plan future activities, it is proper to say, “this is what I plan to do, if the Lord wills.” Leave flexibility in plans for God to guide our steps.
 - The important thing is not the saying of the words, “if God wills,” but for us and those who hear our words to be reminded that God is sovereign.
 - The core of the philosophy that ignores God’s sovereignty is “we are masters of our own destiny.” Life itself teaches us that we are not “a master of our own destiny.”
 - Saying “if the Lord wills” when we speak of plans confirms that we recognize and act on the truth that God is sovereign, and we live and act in His grace and mercy.
7. **James 4:17: *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.***
- Know the right thing to do! As believers, we have the guidance of Scripture about things to do and things to avoid. Further we have the indwelling Holy Spirit who prompts us about what is right and what is wrong.
 - To know the right things to do, we must know the Scripture and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s guidance. If we know what needs doing and can do it but don’t, we sin.
8. **James 5:1-6: *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.***
- In this passage, James appears to be pointing out the destiny of unbelievers who have abused others either in the way they obtained their wealth or in the way they have inappropriately used or hoarded those riches or all of the above.
 - “Coveting things” is, of course, a threat to everyone, believers and unbelievers alike.
 - These verses seem aimed at those who are materially rich but spiritually poor.
 - James begins with a general rebuke to the wealthy who abuse their wealth and follows up with four specific points.

- The general rebuke is for using the power of wealth to take advantage of others. laying up treasure rather than using it to help others in ways like direct monetary gifts or gifts of things like food, helping with health care, providing jobs, or by buying useful tools and sharing them with others.
- (1.) Covetousness is a potential problem for everyone but is a particular danger for wealthy believers.
- Covetousness can lead to hoarding (an unwarranted storing things for the future).
- Perhaps a large amount of food is stored when a neighbor is hungry and in great need.
- James reminds us that hoarded things, whether money or other things, lose value. Food spoils, clothes get moth eaten or out of style, and metals rust.
- James is not condemning prudent saving. Scripture reminds us that we must provide for our family. That requires prudent use of God-given resources.
- Prudent saving is wise. Hoarding is inappropriate saving. Planning thoughtfully and prudently is necessary to avoid chaos and disorder in our life.
- Planning must be tentative. Our lives are like a mist. We don't know if we will live to see tomorrow. We are to live our life with recognition we are utterly dependent on God. If God wills, we will live and will attempt to do the things we plan.
- (2.) Covetousness can lead to dishonesty such as hiring a laborer and then inappropriately withholding all or a portion of wages due.
- (3.) Covetousness can lead to excessive self-indulgence, living on earth in luxury beyond reason.
- (4.) Covetousness can cause two-faced mistreatment of innocent people who happen to get in the way of acquiring something passionately coveted.
- Whether rich or poor in worldly goods, every believer is to fix their hope on the Lord and be rich in good works. Excessive focus on self leads to many kinds of problems.
- Strive to live to please God.