

The Problem Of Judgmentalism

James 4:11-12

1. Speaking Judgmentally Against Others Makes Us Superior To Others (11a)

^{11a} Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. (Rom 14:4-5; Mt 7:1-5, 15-16)

2. Speaking Judgmentally Against God's Law Makes Us Superior To God's Word (11b)

^{11b} 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. (James 2:12; 1 Tim 6:3-5)

3. Speaking Judgmentally Against God's Law Makes Us Superior To God (12)

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? (Mt 10:28; Rom 12:17-21)

Conclusion:

- Realize we are all sinners saved by God's grace and think humbly when we're prone to self-righteous judging.
- Make sure our issues to fight for are God's issues. Be gracious when it's an issue of preference over righteousness.
- Don't take God's role of Judge and Avenger. Share the hope with others of how we're saved from judgment.

Discussion:

- Do we struggle more with thinking we're superior to others, God's Word or God? Why?
- What issues inflame your self-righteousness?
- How does our self-righteousness motivate a spirit of judgmentalism?
- How does our salvation enable us to be more gracious?

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James 4:11-12 ¹¹ 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?

Introduction:

- 7 sermons ago, we addressed “Love Over Judgmentalism” in James 2.
- Back then, it was whether or not you wore facemasks or not.
- Today, it’s how we protest for “Black Lives Matter”
 - Judgmental posts:
 - “If you’re **silent**, you’re a part of the problem”
 - “All **Cops** Are Illegitimate” (children carrying ACAB signs)
 - “All **White** People Are Racists”
- It will be more effective to identify specific individuals and specific acts of atrocities then to make blanket statements just because we’re angry and fed up.
- This is where being slow to speak and quick to listen becomes key in being appropriately angry.
- The **pendulum** effect responds to one traumatic incident with a response that’s 180 degrees in polar opposition when the response might be somewhere in the middle.
- Example:
 - Some horrific injustices by some bad police officers means that **All Cops** are at fault.
 - A “**White Lives Matters** Burnley” banner flew across the sky in a soccer match versus Manchester United in England
 - The **Ku Klux Klan** is a pendulum response to the civil war defeat.
 - Tearing down the statue of **Ulysses Grant** is a pendulum response – he led the defeat of the South in the Civil War and sought to eradicate the Ku Klux Klan
 - **Looting** is a pendulum response to civil injustices

1. Speaking Judgmentally Against Others Makes Us Superior To Others (11a)

^{11a} *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.*

- “Speak evil” = *katalaleo* (καταλάλω) = speak against (lit.), slander
 - “The evil lies in the speaker’s hostile intention, aimed at eroding the position or character of the one spoken against.” (Homer Kent, *The Epistle of James*, p. 267)
 - Any speech, truth or false, which demeans a person
- This is the intense cutting words that are expressed in the “quarrels and fights” in 4:1
- When we speak evil against others in slanderous ways, it’s like throwing bombs
- **Bombs explode and destroy, they don’t create.**
- We need **constructive** conversations for change – not destructive accusations.

- Ie/ I listened to the doctors before congress on the Corona virus – I’m disappointed how political it is – either attacking Trump or defending Trump – let’s attack and cure a virus!!
- Went parenting our kids, it’s not about “Why are you doing this to me?” It’s about “Why are you doing this to God?”
- Remember our recurring theme this month: **It’s not about who is right** in a conflict, but **what is right**. Because the “who” is right is God – not about our ego-driven need to be the one in control, the one who is never wrong because we fear failure.
- Even when a person is wrong or sins or commits a crime, they are entitled to a hearing, due process.
- Ie/ the news is horrible to watch because both sides are attacking each other in partisan politics
- The news stations are examples of pendulum reaction. Give me the news without commentary and let me make up my own mind!
- There are things I like and don’t like about Trump. The same with Obama.
- Give credit where it is due. Exercise dissent when appropriate.
- But we don’t need a blanket slander like “I hate Trump” or “I hate Biden” or “All Cops Are Bad”

Romans 14:4-5 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

- Not everyone is going to respond like you
- People will react to Covid differently than you
- People will react to reopening church different than you
- People will react to BLM different than you
- Be careful, though, by throwing out Matthew 7:1 “Judge not.” The context does not rule out discernment or evaluation. We are to judge, but without self-righteousness.

Matthew 7:1-5

- 1 “Judge not, that you be not judged.
- 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
- 4 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.

Matthew 7:15-16 – discernment necessary

- 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

- **Discernment is needed even when hashtagging “Black Lives Matter”**
 - I love and agree with the principle.
 - I even get how saying “All Lives Matter” is a dismissive response to the plight of our black brothers and sisters.
- But as a specific organization that people send their money to, you need to be discerning about what the organization believes and how they spend the money you send.
 - I’m not saying don’t – but be discerning, exercise judgment according to God’s Word.
 - Click on the website: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>
 - There are more issues being advocated than black lives matter. There will be issues they are promoting that are beyond our biblical view of morality and sexuality.
 - Do black lives matter to God? Absolutely.
 - Do they matter to me? Absolutely.
 - Do I endorse everything in this organization that endorses moral and sexual views that oppose biblical teaching? No.
 - Are there more biblical options to support equality and justice for blacks? YES!!
 - Are you for defunding police? I’m not. But maybe you are. Do we judge each other over this? Not without a good discussion with respect from both sides.
 - <https://tonyevans.org/racial-unity-resources/>
- But self-analysis is also needed.
 - Am I self-righteous or righteous because of Christ’s mercy?
 - Do I make every situation about me?
 - Do I have to be right in everything?
 - Do I have prejudice?
 - Is their trauma in my life that has caused me to look down on others?
 - My grandma was mugged a few times by African American youth when she lived in Hunter’s Point? But are all black people evil? No. But would she have had fear to overcome. Sure.
 - I’ve been accused of being at fault for Covid 19. Are all white people that biased? No. But do I have to make a conscious effort to not be distrustful of all white people? Sure.
 - Are there police officers to cross the line? Yes. But are all police officers bad – No! We must make a conscious effort to work with our police but not paint a broad brush as to who they are.
- We live in a day where it is popular to cast judgment on others.
- We feel empowered tearing down statues or flashing a confederate flag. Renaming Drake, Columbus, Jefferson or Washington or Fort Bragg? I understand, but how far do we go?
 - I wonder if we should remove the name of Chester Arthur who signed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.
 - While we’re at it, let go after Franklin Roosevelt who signed the Executive Order 9066 sending 113,000 Japanese Americans (2/3rds of whom were citizens) to Internment Camps including Tanforan. Not one was ever convicted of being a spy for Japan though 18 caucasians were spies for Japan.
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/historyinternment.htm>

- Don't name anything after me. When you dig deep enough, there is plenty of reason to tear down any statues or painting of me. I'm a deplorable sinner.
- My point is that it is easier to look at and blame others.
- We must be discerning.
- **But we must first begin with ourselves.**
- History points out our mistakes. We learn so we won't repeat them.

What I find missing today?

- But where is the talk of **forgiveness**?
- Where is the talk of **grace**?
- What is the basis for what is **just**?

2. Speaking Judgmentally Against God's Law Makes Us Superior To God's Word (11b)

***11b** 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.*

- "speak against" a brother
 - "Judge" = κρινω = condemn, but more broadly including negative speech, gossip, verbal attacks, false accusations (Blomberg & Kamell, *James: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 197)
- "but" – in addition
- "judge the law" – you are a judge of the law
- By making sure our issue is biblical the law of love to love our neighbor
- James is not referring to the Mosaic Law – the legal and religious code Jews followed in the Old Testament
- James is speaking about the "perfect law, the law of liberty" (1:25) which is the "royal law" of "love your neighbors" (2:8)

James 2:12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.

- "Law of Liberty" = God's law is not oppressive, it's freeing
- We've been set free to do good for God's glory and help others
- Blacks should be served in love
- Browns should be served in love
- Poor communities of Southeast Asians should be served in love
- Or are we bending the law to fight an unbiblical fight
- Law of Love = are we obey
- If we counter God's Word or abuse God's Word to prove our points or preferences then we become superior to God's will
- If you're going to take a stand, make sure it's a biblical stand!
- If you're going to protest, make sure it's fighting for a biblical principle!
- It's inspiring to see so many young people inspired to stand up for justice

- But is it God's justice or man's justice apart from God?
- How do we know if our civil rights protests and rebellion against our parents are appropriate before God?

1 Timothy 6:3-5

3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,

4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,

5 And constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

- Be careful of how false teaching creeps in the Christian Church through redefining terms.
- This happens when people think they are above God's Word
- With so much emphasis on Social Justice, much of the language has blurred into the church blurring the Biblical Gospel. We need to be on guard to different movements that creep into the church like Liberation Theology in the 60's and 70's, the Prosperity Gospel in the last 30 years and the Social Gospel most recently.

Terms	Biblical Gospel	Prosperity Gospel	Social Gospel
Sin	Morally Defy God	Poverty	Oppression
Sinners	All Of Us	Faithless	Oppressors
Savior	Jesus As Atoner	Your Faith Is Power	The Outspoken
Salvation	Justice on Jesus Forgiveness from God	Wealth Health	Equality Fairness
Sanctification	Spiritual Conformity to Christ	Material Excess	Social Awareness

- When the true Gospel transforms – forgiveness, grace and justice rule
- Sin is defeated
- Christ died on the cross not to free us from Rome, Democrats, Republicans or Law Enforcement – He came to save us from our sin
- It is sin that kills unjustly
- It is sin that must be defeated

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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?

- To speak against the law, we make ourselves superior to the lawgiver
- God is the One who gives the law and is the Judge with this law
 - Because God is the Giver of the law, He is the best Judge
- God is the One who saves us from the law and destroys those who rebel against His law
- We usurp God's as Judge when we start making judgments about others

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

- R. Kent Hughes cites Puritan William Beveridge:
 I cannot pray, except I sin;
 I cannot preach, but I sin;
 I cannot administer, nor receive the holy sacrament, but I sin.
 My very repentance needs to be repended of;
 And the tears I shed need washing in the blood of Christ.
 (cited in *James: Faith And Works*, p. 198)

- James summarizes this section: *But who are you to judge your neighbor?*
- God is the judge and avenger of sin.
- We don't take His place.
- God said "Let vengeance be mine."

Romans 12:17-21

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written,
 "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Conclusion:

1. Realize we are all sinners saved by God's grace and think humbly when we're prone to self-righteous judging.
2. Make sure our issues to fight for are God's issues. Be gracious when it's an issue of preference over righteousness.
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