

## James 4:11-12

### Chase Green

**Verse 11:** “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.” Many people are quick to excuse away their sins by quoting Mathew 7:1: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Likewise, they may point to this passage in James, or the passage in Romans 14:4ff: “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand...”

But these passages, in actuality, are not referring to making no judgments at all (See John 7:24), but rather address very specific types of sinful judgment. Reading the verses subsequent to Matthew 7:1 reveals that Jesus was talking about not making **HYPOCRITICAL JUDGMENTS**. Reading Romans 14:4 in its context reveals that Paul was talking about not judging others in **MATTERS OF OPINION**. And this passage in James is talking about not harshly judging others by **EVIL SPEAKING**. The American Standard Version uses the term speaking “AGAINST another.” The idea is that Christians should not be quick to tear one another down, speaking evil about one another without knowing all the facts (a.k.a. gossip, or backbiting).

Sometimes Christians (well-meaning, or perhaps not-so-well-meaning) become guilty of this when they speak ill of others based upon hearsay, rather than actually going to the (possibly) offending brother or sister themselves. We must be careful not to accept the testimony of a talebearer. Talebearers can cause great harm to the Lord’s church. Heed these six warnings found in Scripture: “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:16). “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter” (Prov. 11:13). “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Prov. 18:8). “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips” (Prov. 20:19). “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (Prov. 26:20). “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Prov. 26:22).

Rather than speaking evil against other Christians because of what you’ve “heard through the grapevine,” a.k.a. gossip, go to that person and find out the truth for yourself (See Matthew 18:15ff). You may find that the entire story was completely made up (false), or you may find it to be true. If that be the case, then the steps of church discipline are in order. Remember, though, to not count him (or her) as an enemy, but rather admonish him (or her) as a brother (or sister) (2 The. 3:15).

**Verse 12:** “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” In other words, no mere human is the final Judge of men’s souls. Jesus will fill that role (Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:9-12; 2 Cor. 5:10)! Therefore, we must remember our own fallibility in making judgments. With that in mind, we will be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). We won’t speak evil about one another without cause, and even when we must mark others for division and false doctrine (Rom. 16:17), we won’t do so smugly with a smile, almost as if we enjoy practicing church discipline, but rather we will do so sorrowfully, because a brother or sister has voluntarily judged himself or herself unworthy of everlasting life (Acts 13:46).