

Why Do We Judge Each Other?

[James 4:11-12](#)

James, Day 20

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. 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 4:11-12, ESV

I was waiting for my van to be serviced - getting new front brakes, I think. On the television screen was a daytime talk show. You know the kind, one where people with big problems from very poor life choices were paraded in front of a gasping studio audience. As I asked the customer service agent for the remote, I thought, "Why do people watch this garbage?" And in thinking that thought I answered my own question.

We love to feel morally superior. Many daytime talk shows have been built on the foundation of gasping self-righteousness: "Can you believe she said that?" "How can people live like that?" "And I thought my life was messed up -whew!" Somehow, if we can find someone who is clearly morally inferior, we can then feel morally superior. The viewers of these shows do it to the people on the shows, and I was doing it in my own mind toward the people who watch these kinds of shows.

Our natural human tendency toward self-righteousness causes us to be quick to judge and condemn others. But God did not give us His law so we could use it as a weapon to assault others. He gave us His law so we could do it. And since we always fail to be doers of the law as we should, the person whose failure to measure up to God's standard should concern us the most is us. When we focus on doing the law, instead of using the law, we are confronted by our own failure and driven to seek God's mercy. We are humbled and made more dependent on God's righteousness and grace.

"There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy." This is the heart of the issue: We can either submit to God or we can try to take His place. Just as we are completely unqualified to save ourselves, so we are completely unqualified to judge others. If we know we need salvation from God, then we must entrust all judgment to His hands as well.

To be clear, James is not forbidding us from teaching what the law says. He is not saying that we should have no moral standards. If God is the one moral lawgiver and judge, then His standard is the only standard we can embrace for our own lives and the only standard we can teach to others. Yet teaching is not judging, and faithfully proclaiming, "Thus says the Lord," is not condemning our neighbors or our brothers. We are to speak the truth in love and leave the judging to God.