

Stop Slandering One Another! **James 4:11-12**

James 4:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of 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 one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

Introduction

Slander is one of the most evil expressions of the sinful nature of man. It is character assassination in its truest form. It is a way of stabbing a person in the back without using a knife. It is a brutal means of destroying someone. It is a cowardly way of misrepresenting the truth and lying about your neighbor. It flows out of the evil heart and drips off the tongue like honey off of a honeycomb, yet it's not sweet. It is deadly poison set on fire from hell.

James 3:6–9 (NKJV)

⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of

nature; and it is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

When medieval monks compiled a list of the seven deadly sins, they included pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and laziness. Conspicuously absent from that list was the sin of slandering others. Nor, in all likelihood, would slander rank very high on any contemporary list of serious sins. It is so widespread we scarcely seem to notice it.

Despite our seemingly casual attitude toward it, slander is a particularly destructive sin. Writing in the 1828 edition of his dictionary, Noah Webster defined slander as “a false tale or report maliciously uttered, and tending to injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens, by exposing him to impeachment and punishment, or by impairing his means of living.” Slander strikes at people’s dignity, defames their character, and destroys their reputation—their most priceless worldly asset (Prov. 22:1; Eccles. 7:1). Human society recognizes the gravity of slander and passes

laws allowing those whose good name is slandered to sue for defamation of character.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 217–218). Moody Press.

Not only is slander a devastating sin, it is also a ubiquitous one. While other sins require a particular set of circumstances before they can be committed, slander needs only a malicious tongue driven by hatred (cf. Pss. 41:7–8; 109:3). Because it is easy to commit, slander is widespread, almost inescapable

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 218). Moody Press.

You can't act more like the devil and align yourself with the demons of hell than when you slander one another.

The Devil led us into the cursed universe and fall of humanity in sin by slandering God, misrepresenting the truth, and defaming the character of God!

In the very beginning, when God created man in the Garden, He gave a very clear and specific Command not to eat of a certain tree. Every other tree was created for him to freely eat. God had created a perfect environment, with perfect weather, perfect beauty and perfect, sufficient food.

Genesis 2:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

God’s command was clear. You have all the rest of Creation to enjoy. DON’T eat the fruit from this one tree, because, if you eat it, you will die. Or in Hebrew, dying you shall die.

There is nothing unclear here. Nothing ambiguous. Nothing hidden. No small print. No hidden contract. God is a God of truth. He does not varnish His words. He does not lie or misrepresent the truth.

Yet the Devil comes along and begins to slander God. Misrepresenting the truth, doing a work of character assassination and defaming of God.

Genesis 3:1–5 (NKJV)

3 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

First, Satan begins by twisting the Words of God and ever so slightly and takes a very positive statement God made and turns it into a negative prohibition

God said positively, you can freely eat of every tree in the Garden except one.

Satan turns it negative and says “you can’t eat of every tree in the garden, can you?”

God says,

I have created all these trees, every tree to eat delicious fruit from, but this one.

Satan says,

God is not allowing you to enjoy yourself by not allowing you to eat of every tree.

He begins by making God a kill joy.

A God that wants to keep something good back from you

A God who doesn’t really want you to enjoy life to the fullest.

This is Defamation of Character #1

So God does not really Love you, or he would give you this

Then it says,

² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

So Eve, correctly repeats the Words of God, with the exception of some added legalism. God never said you couldn’t touch it.

In fact, Adam was commanded by God to

Genesis 2:15 (LSB)

15 cultivate it and keep it.

It would be hard to cultivate and keep the Garden if the tree of life needed cultivating and pruning and you couldn’t touch it.

So Eve does what so many of us do, We take the clear commands of God and add a few extra laws and make them as binding as the laws of God. The Devil likes this. It makes what God commands that much more a burden to bare....

But then comes Defamation of Character #2

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

You will not surely die. — — God is a liar

God is not
omniscience —- he
does really know that
you won't die.

God is not Wise, or he
would obviously want
you to know good and
evil

God knows you will be like him — — God is Selfish.

He does not want you to have what he has. He would rather you be in the dark, not knowing good and evil. He is intentionally hiding truth from you.

Job 1:8–11 (NKJV)

⁸ Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”

⁹ So Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

John 8:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.

The Devil is the original slanderer
διάβολος *diábolos*; gen. *diabólou*, masc., fem. noun from *diabállō* (1225), to accuse. A false accuser, used for the devil.

(I) One who falsely accuses and divides people without any reason. He is an accuser, a slanderer

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Revelation 12:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,
 “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of
 our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for
 the accuser of our brethren, who accused them
 before our God day and night, has been cast down.

1 Timothy 3:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not
 slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

Titus 2:3 (NKJV)

³ the older women likewise, that they be reverent in
 behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine,
 teachers of good things—

2 Timothy 3:1–3 (NKJV)

3 But know this, that in the last days perilous times
 will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves,
 lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,
 disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-
 control, brutal, despisers of good,

The Bible says much about slander
 Leviticus 19:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the Lord.

Psalm 15:3 (NKJV)

³ He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor does he take up a reproach against his
friend;

Psalm 50:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil,
And your tongue frames deceit.
²⁰ You sit *and* speak against your brother;
You slander your own mother's son.

Psalm 101:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
Him I will destroy;
The one who has a haughty look and a proud
heart,
Him I will not endure.

Psalm 140:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Let not a slanderer be established in the earth;
Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.”

Proverbs 20:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets;

Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.

Ephesians 4:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Colossians 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

1 Peter 2:1 (NKJV)

2 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,

The Scriptures chronicle the devastating effects of slander.

it destroys friendships.

Proverbs 16:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ A perverse man sows strife,

And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Proverbs 17:9 (NKJV)

⁹ He who covers a transgression seeks love,
But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

**creates deep wounds inflicted on the one
slandered,**

Proverbs 18:8 (NKJV)

⁸ The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles,
And they go down into the inmost body.

slander can ultimately destroy people.

Isaiah 32:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Also the schemes of the schemer *are* evil;
He devises wicked plans
To destroy the poor with lying words,
Even when the needy speaks justice.

Slanderers stir up contention

Proverbs 26:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Where *there is* no wood, the fire goes out;
And where *there is* no talebearer, strife ceases.

spread strife

Proverbs 6:16–19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ These six *things* the Lord hates,
 Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:.....
¹⁹ A false witness *who* speaks lies,
 And one who sows discord among brethren.

and become fools .

Proverbs 10:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Whoever hides hatred *has* lying lips,
 And whoever spreads slander *is* a fool.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 218). Moody Press.

Lesson

The Command

The Concern

The Confirmation

The Command

11 Do not speak evil of one another,

Katalaleō (**speak against**) appears only here and in 1 Peter 2:12 and 3:16. Along with the related nouns *katalalia* (“slander”; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Pet. 2:1) and *katalalous* (“slanderers”; Rom. 1:30), it refers to mindless, thoughtless, careless, critical, derogatory, untrue speech directed against others.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 221). Moody Press.

Apparently the reference is to the major way in which their “fights and quarrels” (v. 1) expressed themselves. The compound verb literally means to “speak down on” (compare the common expression “running each other down”) and is broader than “slander” in the NIV rendering. Basically meaning to “speak evil of,” Wolff notes that such evil speaking “includes (1) willful false accusations, (2) exaggerations of faults that are real, (3) needless repetition of real faults, (4) slander.” It thus denotes critical, derogatory speech that is maliciously intended to influence others against the person being spoken against. It is generally assumed that the harsh, critical remarks are about someone absent. It is the temper that deliberately calls attention to the faults of others while minimizing their

virtues. Kittel notes that the essence of the evil lies in the preposition *kata*, “down, against,” and that the point is not the falsity of what is said but rather its uncharitableness. The evil lies in the speaker’s hostile intention, aimed at eroding the position or character of the one spoken against. It is an activity related closely to the work of the devil, the slanderer (cf. v. 7).

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 241). BMH Books.

καταλαλέω *katalaléō*; contracted *katalalṓ*, fut. *katalalésō*, from *katá* (2596), against, and *laléō* (2980), to speak. To speak against, to speak evil of (James 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16).

Deriv.: *katalalía* (2636), backbiting, defamation; *katálalos* (2637), a backbiter.

Syn.: *katēgoréō* (2723), to accuse; *egkaléō* (1458), to accuse in court; *elégchō* (1651), to rebuke; *sukophantéō* (4811), to accuse falsely; *kataginóskō* (2607), to blame, condemn; *mémphomai* (3201), to find fault; *krínō* (2919), to judge; *diabállō* (1225), to falsely accuse; *kakologéō* (2551), to speak evil; *blasphēméō* (987), to blaspheme, revile.

Ant.: *ainéō* (134), to speak in praise of; *epainéō* (1867), to commend; *eulogéō* (2127), to speak well of, bless; *humnéō* (5214), to laud; *dikaióō* (1344), to justify.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

The prohibition (*mē katalaleite*), the only imperative in these verses, stands in marked contrast to the ten aorist imperatives of verses 7–10. The present tense denotes that this evil is an habitual practice among them, whereas the *mē* demands that it be terminated

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 241). BMH Books.

The Command

The Concern

The Concern comes in James' statements on just how serious it is to slander. He makes his concern clear by an escalation of seriousness. Moving from the brothers, to the law, and then to God.

1. You are willing to Slander because you do not really understand who you are slandering.

11 Do not speak evil of one another, **brethren**. He who speaks evil of **a brother** and judges his **brother**, speaks evil of the law and judges the law....

The bible is very clear on the priority of the brother in Christ in the World and how we are to treat one another. In fact, in scripture, regarding christian liberties, Paul makes it clear that we should offend the unbeliever before we offend the believer. The brother is the priority. God places a high priority on how we are to treat one another.

Matthew 18:6–11 (NKJV)

⁶ “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

⁸ “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

¹⁰ “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

11 For (Because) the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

In other words, you are messing with one that Jesus died for. He purchased that person. He is part of his Body. He is the part of the Bride of Christ. If you attack another believer, another brother in Christ. If you slander a brother, you have slandered Christ.

Listen to what happened to Paul
Acts 9:3–5 (NKJV)

3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”**

5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”

Then the Lord said, **“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. I....**

How is it that Paul could possibly be persecuting Christ.

Matthew 25:34–40 (NKJV)

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **35** for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I

was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'

Romans 14:14–20 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. ¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men.

¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense.

Bob Mumford once said, “The Christian army is the only one that shoots its wounded.”

Bubonic plague—the “Black Death”—killed 25 million in 14 century Europe, roughly 40 percent of the population. Long-distance merchant ships bearing flea-infested rats likely spread the deadly disease-causing bacilli throughout Western Europe. But the scientific understanding of communicable disease was more than five centuries away.

So when the populace searched for answers, the ecclesiastical hierarchy lectured them on how the Black Death was God’s retribution for their wicked ways. In Spain, tolerance of the “killers of Christ” was among them. Soon tales of Jews pouring poisonous powder into wells circulated throughout what is now Germany and France.

A new fear fueled suspicions of minority groups in late medieval Europe, as the belief took hold that lepers, Jews, and others were conspiring to poison

drinking wells in order to cause widespread illness and mortality

Gavin Langmuir claimed that “it would be hard to find a clearer example of irrational scapegoating” than well-poisoning accusations against Jews.¹

This was not new. The Jews had been slandered and falsely accused earlier

before the black plague, Jews were falsely accused and slandered regarding

A “Blood Libel” is the allegation that Jews murder non-Jews, especially [Christian](#) children, in order to obtain blood for the [Passover](#) or other rituals: most blood libels occurred close to Passover, Jews were herded into pits, fields or houses for the purpose of burning them alive. Escape was virtually impossible. Those who survived the flames were greeted by men wielding “cudgels and stones” who “dashed out the brains of those trying to creep out of the fire,” according to the account of Von Diessenhoven, a canon of the city of Konstanz. There is no need to regard as a wholly spiteful invention the statement that the consecrated wafer shed drops of blood, the most common manner in which the outrage became known, for a scarlet fungoid organism (called for this reason the

Micrococcus prodigiosus) may sometimes form on stale food kept in a dry place, having an appearance not unlike blood. The charge of desecrating the Host was leveled against Jews all over the Roman Catholic world, frequently bringing in its train persecution and massacre.

In various cities Jews were tortured to confess their part in the conspiracy. The defamation, killings, and expulsions spread through the kingdoms of Christian [Spain](#), France, and Germany, to [Poland-Lithuania](#), affecting about 300 Jewish communities.

Typically Jews were “put on the wheel and tortured” until they confessed to elaborate plots, often involving rabbis from far-away places instructing them by letter to poison wells in an effort to decimate Christianity. One such confessor said the poison had been formulated from frogs, lizards, spiders and “Christians’ hearts,” according to the [Jewish Encyclopedia](#)’s account. The poison was wrapped in cloth until it was about “the size of a large nut” and then deposited in wells or springs, the confessors declared. <https://momentmag.com/why-were-jews-blamed-for-the-black-death/>

On September 26, 1348, Pope Clement VI issued a bull in [Avignon](#) denouncing this allegation, stating that “certain Christians, seduced by that liar, the devil, are imputing the pestilence to poisoning by Jews.” This imputation and the massacre of Jews in consequence were defined by the pope as “a horrible thing.” He tried to convince Christians that “since this pestilence is all but universal everywhere, and by a mysterious decree of God has afflicted, and continues to afflict, both Jews and many other nations throughout the diverse regions of the earth to whom a common existence with Jews is unknown [the charge] that the Jews have provided the cause or the occasion for such a crime is without plausibility.”

Both the emperors Charles IV and Peter IV of Aragon also tried to protect the Jews from the results of the accusation. The arguments generally put forward by the rulers were expressed by the physician Konrad of Megenberg in his *Buch der Natur* arrived at in the light of his own experience: “But I know that there were more Jews in Vienna than in any other German city familiar to me, and so many of them died of the plague that they were obliged to enlarge their cemetery. To have brought this on themselves would have been folly on their part.”

What followed was a massacre of Jews unparalleled in its magnitude and ferocity.

But although it may not have been the first time, the thoroughness of Jewish slaughter in Germany, France and Switzerland and the preferred method of elimination— burning—now seem like portents of the Holocaust some 600 years later.

In that city, Jews herded into a house specially constructed for their torching were “dancing, others singing and the rest weeping” as the flames engulfed them, Von Diessenhoven wrote. Immediate conversion to Christianity provided an escape for some. Babies were wrested away and baptized as their parents burned. Christian persecutors had ceased to view Jews as a separate subculture, protected but despised, a population that must be endured if not fully tolerated. By the time of the plague, Jews were perceived as enemies.

In January 1349, the entire Jewish community in the city of Basel was burned at the stake. The Jewish communities of Freiburg, Augsburg, Nurnberg, Munich, Konigsberg, Regensburg, and other centers, all were either exiled or burned. In Worms,

in March 1349, the entire Jewish community committed suicide. In Cologne, the Jews were forced to flee.

Some Jewish communities attempted resistance. In Mainz, Jews succeeded in staving off the mob for a time, killing 200 of the attackers. When the inevitable counterattack began, according to a story in Haaretz, Jews barricaded themselves in their homes and set fire to them rather than starving or surrendering to the mob. More than 6,000 died, one of the largest totals of the plague years.

Of the 3,000 Jews in Erfurt, none survived the attack of the Christian mobs. By 1350, those Jews that survived the Black Death itself were destroyed by the ravages of the mobs. The Jewish communities in Antwerp and Brussels were entirely exterminated in 1350. There were almost no Jews left in Germany or the Low Countries by 1351

Some officials gave way to the mobs. Others found ways to profit. The Holy Roman Empire, facing tax losses if Jews were annihilated, acquiesced to the destruction of Jews in Nuremberg and elsewhere in return for a cut of the wealth derived from the seizure of Jewish possessions.

By 1351, there had been 350 incidents of anti-Jewish pogroms, and 60 major and 150 minor Jewish communities had been exterminated.

1. You are willing to Slander because you do not really understand **who you are slandering.**

2. You are willing to Slander because you do not really understand **what you are slandering.**

¹¹ Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

3. You are willing to Slander because you do not really understand **Sovereign you are slandering.**

¹² There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?