



July 13, 2025

*Real Wisdom for a Messy World*

## **DON'T KICK GOD OFF HIS THRONE**

James 4:11-12



### **1. Opening Discussion:** (You will probably want to use only one of these openers)

- a. When you were a child, were you ever told “if you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all”? What did that mean to you? Do you still feel the same way?
- b. How do you feel about obeying the law? Are there some laws that you view as inconsequential (does 55 MPH really mean 55)? How do you determine where to draw the line regarding obedience?

### **2. Prayer:**

- a. Adoration – Pray a Psalm or other Scripture to focus on praising God.
- b. Confession – Spend time confessing any known sins. 1 John 1:9
- c. Thanksgiving – Thank God for answered prayers, blessings, gifts, and opportunities to serve.
- d. Supplications
  - i. Pray for the activities of His Church locally and around the world.
  - ii. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of others and yourself.
- e. **Least Reached People Group: Alas of Indonesia** (*from the IMB “Loving the Lost Through Prayer” guide*)

“The Alas people of Indonesia have made their home in the valley between two mountain ridges in Aceh. They are often called the welcoming mat to Aceh because of their kindness and strategic location on the southern border. Many Alas grow rice and corn for the whole province. Others farm coffee, nutmeg, and hazelnut. Although the Alas are Muslim, they are often more open to other religions than other people groups in Aceh. They usually turn to witch doctors and pray to ancestors for help with day-to-day troubles and needs. They haven’t heard the good news that Jesus is preparing a home for His people, and they can live forever with Him. Pray the Alas people will welcome Jesus into their lives, casting aside all religious traditions to follow Him.”

### **3. Sermon Key Points**

- a. Speaking Harshly To or About Another Believer Judges Them
  - i. To speak evil about someone is to judge them.
  - ii. Such speech is always a sin.
- b. Judging A Fellow Believer Tries to Sinfully Take God's Job
  - i. God is the only true Judge - don't try to take His job.
  - ii. God's friend won't try to kick Him off His throne.

- c. Always Speak, Text, and Type Words of Life and Grace (Ephesians 4)
  - i. Speak the truth in love.
  - ii. Always build others up in love

#### 4. Bible Study:

- a. **Sunday Afternoon** – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:

- i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
- ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
- iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
- iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

- b. **Monday:**

- i. This week's focal passage is only two verses, yet it contains what may well be the most relevant and practical instruction to American Christians in 2025.
  - 1. Read James 4:11-12 several times in your preferred translation.
  - 2. What single truth stood out most as you read these two verses?
  - 3. What did you find surprising or difficult to understand?
- ii. Now read the passage in several different translations. Assuming you have a smartphone, a good way to do this is to use the "YouVersion" app, which allows easy access to about 80 English translations. (The ESV, NIV, CSB, NASB, NKJV, and NRSV are good versions to download.)
  - 1. What differences did you notice in the translations?
  - 2. Do they say the same thing in different words, or do they reflect different understandings of the two verses?
  - 3. What additional insight do you have about the message God is providing through James after reading different translations?

- c. **Tuesday:**

- i. Focus today on just the first sentence of verse 11.
- ii. Who does it seem that James is addressing? How does his tone differ from that which he used in verses 4 and 8?
  - 1. From the manner of address, what might we conclude about conditions in the churches James is writing to?
  - 2. Do churches in America ever experience this issue? Rhetorically, does LRBC?

- iii. The Greek word (*katalaleō*) translated “speak evil” in the ESV (“slander” in the NIV and “criticize” in the CSB) can be used to describe many different forms of hurtful speech. Read these passages and identify the types of speech each is referring to. Have you ever seen such speech in a modern church?
  1. Numbers 21:5
  2. Psalm 101:5
  3. 1 Peter 2:12 & 3:16
- iv. Do we “speak evil” (“slander”, “criticize”) if what we are saying is true? What differentiates “speaking evil” from constructive criticism?

**d. Wednesday:**

- i. Focus today on the final two sentences of verse 11.
- ii. What is the first thing James tells us we are actually doing when we speak against our brother or sister?
  1. How/why does speaking against others constitute judging?
  2. How does Jesus explain it to us in Matthew 7:1-5?
  3. Read Luke 6:37, John 8:7 and Romans 2:1-4. What additional insight do they provide?
- iii. What is the second thing James tells us we are doing when we speak against our brother or sister? What does it mean to you to “speak evil against the law”? The CSB translates this idea by saying we “defame” the law. How does this help clarify James’ meaning?
- iv. What is the third thing James tells us we are doing when we speak against our brother or sister? If we deliberately choose to disobey the law, what judgment are we making about the law?
- v. Commentators disagree about what law James has in mind in this verse. Some would say the law God gave through Moses, particularly Exodus 20:16. Others would say the Royal Law Jesus put forward in Matthew 22:39. Which do you think best fits? Does it really matter?

**e. Thursday:**

- i. Today, focus on verse 12.
- ii. According to Isaiah 33:22, who is the only Lawgiver and Judge?
  1. How does Exodus 24:12 demonstrate this?
  2. Read Deuteronomy 32:39, 1 Samuel 2:6, and Psalm 68:20 & 75:6-7. Based on these verses, what is James saying the Lawmaker can save us from? Conversely, what is meant when James says He can destroy?
  3. Based on Matthew 10:28, what do you think James is probably thinking of when he writes about “judging”? Who is the only one that can

rightly make that judgment (see John 5:22 & 30, 8:15-18, and Acts 10:42)?

- iii. Read Romans 14:1-13 (especially verses 3-4 and 10-13).
  - 1. How does Paul's instruction reinforce and expand on what James teaches?
  - 2. What rationale do verses 10-12 give us to not judge others by "speaking evil" against our brother or sister? How does Matthew 7:1-5 relate?
- iv. Based on the final word of verse 12, what "law" does it now seem James is talking about? Would anyone who was obeying Jesus' teachings in Matthew 22:39 and 7:12 be able to judge a neighbor (especially with regard to their eternal destiny)?

f. **Friday:**

- i. Read Ephesians 4:1-5:2.
- ii. What insight does Paul's instruction to the Ephesians add to the lesson James is teaching about "speaking evil" to a brother or sister? Which verses seem particularly relevant?
- iii. If we were truly living as Paul describes in Ephesians 4:31-5:2, would there be a need for James 4:11-12? But since none of us probably meet the standard Paul sets in these verses, what do we need to do (1 John 1:9)?

g. **Saturday:**

- i. Our speech has been a topic James has returned to several times. Read and meditate on James 1:19-21, 3:3-12, and 4:11-12, paying particular attention to the applications these passages offer in your own life.
- ii. Finally, skip ahead in James and read the final two verses (5:19-20). Note that James does not preclude but rather encourages us to help our brothers and sisters address sin in their lives. Be careful not to allow this week's teaching to become an excuse for avoiding our responsibility to help our fellow believers.

5. **Application:**

- a. We must carefully guard how we speak about our brothers and sisters, especially in our electronic communications. Emails, chats, and social media posts have a life of their own and are easily misunderstood (and you will not be there to explain what you really meant). If you must say something that could possibly be taken as negative, don't use electronic means to do so.
- b. Remember that the standard Christ set was one of forgiveness (70 X 7), not of getting even. If we truly practice that kind of forgiveness, there should seldom be a reason or opportunity to make slanderous statements or speak evil about a brother or sister. And while James seems to be addressing how we speak about/to fellow believers, the command to "love our neighbor as ourselves" extends the principle to all people.