

Introduction: Few things have more power...

¹¹Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

James 4:11-12 (NIV)

We are commanded to stop “tearing one another down” by our “slanderous” speech.

- What is “slanderous” speech?
- How is slanderous speech commonly practiced?
- Why do even sincere Christians get caught in the “web” of speaking against others?

Why is “tearing others down” by our speech and judgmental attitudes one of the most serious sins mentioned in Scripture?

- **Reason #1:** Because it demonstrates total disregard and contempt for God's highest command – to love one another. (Leviticus 19:18, James 2:8)

Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

James 4:11b (NIV)

- **Reason #2:** Because it reveals that we are in fact “playing God.”

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

James 4:12 (NIV)

How can we break the habit of “playing God?”

- Step 1: Develop _____ about speaking against others.

¹Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV)

³⁶But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned.”

Matthew 12:36-37 (NIV)

- **Step 2: Ponder the _____ of your speech.**

³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

- **Step 3: Refuse to buy _____!**

³So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

Romans 2:3 (NIV)

- **Step 4: Refuse to let others _____.**

- **Step 5: _____ less!**

¹⁹When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

Proverbs 10:19 (NIV)

Summary: A good paraphrase to memorize!

¹¹Don't criticize and speak evil about each other, dear brothers. If you do, you will be fighting against God's law of loving one another, declaring it is wrong. But your job is not to decide whether this law is right or wrong, but to obey it. ¹²Only He who made the law can rightly judge among us. He alone decides to save us or destroy. So what right do you have to judge or criticize others?

James 4:11-12 (TLB)

Discussion Questions:

1. What was most helpful to you from today's message?
2. Why, from God's perspective, is it so important that we speak about one another and relate in a loving manner? What's at stake?
3. Where do you find yourself most prone to "speak against" someone or become judgmental?
4. Which of the practical steps to stop "playing God" do you need to put into practice? Share your game plan to do this with your group.
5. Is there someone you need to apologize to?