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| Topic | Judging Others |
| Reference | James 4: 11-12 |
| Date | 15 May 2016 |
| Speaker | Br Arnold Lim |

It is a really-really practical topic and the Bible surprises us in how much it talks about this. We all are guilty of judging others.

[**11**](http://biblehub.com/james/4-11.htm) 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.

[**12**](http://biblehub.com/james/4-12.htm) There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Romans 2 very heavily speak about particularly the Jews and the Pharisees then Paul goes to Romans 14 where brothers were weaker in their conscience. 1-Corinthians 4, 5 & 8. So there are a lot of chapters that are all about judging.

Matthew 7 is a Sermon of Mount. At the end of this chapter Jesus says these words,

[**24**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/7-24.htm) “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

We will find that a lot of the Book of James is actually loaded out from the Sermon of Mount and as far as the Sermon of Mount has got to do with wisdom James has to do with wisdom and in fact the text we look at today is coming from what we call Spiritual Wisdom and we find that the spiritual wisdom when we look at chapter 3

**17** The wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving, mercy.

These are the beatitudes. If we will ask ourselves do we judge objectively anything? Most of us will say that I do, because nobody likes to believe that you judge wrongly. So most of us will say that we are not judgmental, we judge fairly.

We all judge and there are three particular areas we judge.

1. Teaching: Those who teach will judge each other.
2. Those in conflict will judge each other.
3. Those who believe Christians should live a certain way will judge those who don’t follow their view.

*Issue is not judgment, but is it righteous or unrighteous judgment?*

James ties judging with many other things and again we must remember we are in the context of spiritual wisdom and his proposition is this, your judging may not be as smart as you think you are. You are not as wise as you think you are and that is why Jesus at the end of the Sermon of Mount says, you have to be like a wise man.

James ties two things together in the first verse, slander and unrighteous judgment.

[**11**](http://biblehub.com/james/4-11.htm) 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.

Essentially judging is slander. Where slandering and judging come from?

In the beginning of James’s letter says what causes fights and quarrel among you. When you quarrel you will slander. There is a dispute in that church. He is pulling it back to two kinds of wisdom. This wisdom does not come from heaven earthly, why, because there you find what, you find this order.

From this order it goes to quarrels, quarrels it goes to slandering and judging. We do not certainly overnight getup and slander a person, it comes from a thinking and that thinking again come from a heart which is not broken and it comes again from the beginning of the beatitudes, because we are spiritually not broken.

*Fix your heart then you will fix your mouth.*

Spiritual wisdom is the thing that pulls it together.

There was a classical case in Numbers 12:1-2

Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. “Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?”

In simple English ‘Cush’ is an area north of Africa. Here Miriam and Aaron made a racist remark; Moses married an African at that time.

There are two things here; there is an accusation that Moses has done wrong by marrying an African. For some reason that is connected to an accusation of why only is God speaking through Moses, aren’t we important, hasn’t He spoken through us. But these are two completely unrelated things. What James is saying that they are completely related because this is how we judge many things?

Because we have dislikes for something we always prejudge. Our judgment starts from an individual and then it spreads to that entire race.

Judgment is about wisdom and what does James say, who is wise and understanding among you. James 3:13. This is his anchor verse. Show your deeds that are done in humility that comes from wisdom.

James is saying that your judgment has impact. There are four things that affect us.

1. External influences.
2. Obvious personal desires.
3. Personal experience.
4. Conscience.

So judgment is much more flawed.

When you judge it was already preloaded from a heart that was bitter then the wisdom goes into it and that it creates it, so it is preloaded. Now let see how it goes on. There is a spiraling effect.

Judgment becomes judgment only when you say it, before that it is just in your mind.

**11** Brothers, 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 over it.**

To understand this we have to look back at James chapter 2.

**8** If you really keep the **royal law** found in scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself”, you are doing right.

He is not talking about the Ten Commandments. He is not talking about keeping the entire Torah, he is talking about the **Royal Law**. Quite interestingly if we go back to James 2 we will see that it really keep the **Royal Law** and we will look at one verse

**7** Are they not the ones who are slandering.

Interestingly it is about slander. This is what the text is saying

2.12b speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom (Mercy triumphs over **judgment**!)

4.12b - But you- who are you to **judge** your neighbor?

There is a certain common denominator in all these verses. It is about judging your neighbor in such a way that you are not loving your neighbor.

*Lev 19:16,18*

Do not go about spreading **slander** among your people**….but love your neighbor as himself.**

This is the **Royal Law** which James is picking up. Why is this important, because it does not matter about who is right or who is wrong.

*Romans 14:15*

If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are **no longer acting in love**.

So it is not about who is theologically right or wrong, is beyond about the quarrel whether who was really at fault, is beyond about whether we should drink wine, are you acting in love.

Romans 14 verse 1 says, if what you do is going to cause trouble, do not do it.

You have unrighteous judgment; it goes down to slandering, from slandering it goes to not loving your neighbor.

Paul balances this in Romans 14 as

[**17**](http://biblehub.com/romans/14-17.htm) For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

James 3:

[**17**](http://biblehub.com/james/3-17.htm) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

[**18**](http://biblehub.com/james/3-18.htm) And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

That is why you do not quarrel. There is a propensity in our moral behavior to shift from the righteousness of God to self-righteous.

Romans 14:21

It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

Romans 14:22

So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.

Because this is acting in love. Because after that we will legalize it, you are not acting in love when you legalize it.

It is not alcohol but the abuse of alcohol, scripture is clear. If we come from a family background where we see so much abuse you will probably say to band it all. So there are two extremes, one is where you go and drink a beer, whisky, brandy, red wine and you do not care. That is one extreme. That is not acting in love. The second is when you swing to one side and say that anybody who opens up a beer is going to go to hell. That is not acting in love and there are so many peoples who do that. So on one hand you have legalism, on the other hand we have basically grace to such a point where you do not care what anyone thinks, I am just to going to do because I like to do it.

History will tell us in America in the early beginning of the 20th century there were lot of saloons and there was a lot of drinking, a lot of gambling and America was in a mess. This is coming straight out of the civil war, so families were broken up. So they went for vote, they called Dry and the Wet. At lot of it was, their country has so much drinking, families have broken up, it is bad for your health and the people leading were the American Temperate Society. They were all the churches. Every protestant church was involved in this except the Episcopalian Church and the Catholic Church who voted against it and the catholic says, who are you to put your morality on the whole country. We are not protestant, we did not come from the puritans, you have no right, but this movement was so strong on January 16, 1919 you cannot buy a beer in America, but what happened after that. There was a guy called Al Capone, he comes from the mob. After that America developed organized crime, because it is very simple. When you legalize it goes underground. Why do you think certain religions that tell you, you cannot do this, you must dress like that, you do this you do not mention has the highest amount of insess. So there are two extremes here.

You just do what you like or you legalize it.

John MacArthur said,

*“It is a sad twist of irony that those who claim to be most focused on the Holy Spirit are in actually the ones doing the most abuse, grieve, insult, misrepresent, quench, and to dishonor Him…put simply, charismatic theology has made no contribution to true biblical theology….it calls itself “Christian”, but in reality is a shame”*

There was a lot of heresies within the charismatic movement but as John Piper says, there is equally if not more abuse and heresies in the non-charismatic movement. That is why Mathew 7 is so important to look at the plank in our own eye.

It goes in so many areas where we move from unrighteous judgment to slander, from slander it goes down to not loving your neighbor. Do you think this is loving the charismatic church. It is not. How can we say that we have learned nothing from that? You should learn from the charismatic how to pray. You should learn from them the power of the Holy Spirit, take the good, get rid of the bad. Sweeping remarks like this are not loving and here it goes to the most important thing when you are in quarrel.

The spiritual wisdom is in love and before we get worked up, pointed on yourself, are you being legalistic about it and how about your own sins.

11 Brothers, 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 over it.

12 **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?**

In the end he says that there is only one real judge, God.

Paul writes in the context of him being an apostle and the church has very malign by fights and quarrels and they are calling Peter, *1 Cor 4:4-5*

**My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent**. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

We hear this so often when people fight, whether churches fighting or Christians fighting or husbands or wife or friends, they all will say our conscience is clear, but actually their conscience is corrupted by sin. It is all preloaded when you made a judgment, there was things before, there was biasness, personal experiences, there were their own desires, they were all interfering a bit and he says, is the Lord who judges me, therefore judge nothing before the appointed time, wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and expose the multitude of man’s heart, at that time each will receive his praise from God, who are we to separate sheep from goats.

We start from judging wrongly, not using spiritual wisdom but human wisdom, you then start to slender people, from that it goes one step, before that you become legalistic and you did not loving enough, you are actually hating that person, but then it goes step below then and the final end of wrong judgment is condemnation. Who are we to condemn. The only person who can condemn is the lawgiver of life and death, the only person who can do it is the lawgiver and judge, God. He is the only one who can save and destroy, but very often we put ourselves in the shoes and we say this person is going to hell. We don’t have any rights to say that. We see this again so tragically in church history.

At the time of Martin Luther King’s time, the black church attempted to integrate the church and people started a campaign against them holding cards like.

Cursed is the man who integrates, Jeremiah 11.

At the bottom of this cursing it comes from a very simple sin, the sin of racism. White America does not want to mix with black America. White America thinks black America is dirty and from that we go to slandering, from slandering you are not loving your neighbor and not loving your neighbor you are cursing that person all in the name of God. Before we throw stones at other we are very much guilty of this.

Biblical slavery was not racial, it is cultural. Slavery in America is completely racial. They go to Africa, they take black people, African people and they make them work in the cotton fields.

There were previously three ships

* **The Good Ship Jesus** *(Jesus of Lubeck)*

This was a ship by Admiral Sir John Hawkins, who was considered a founder of slavery and he calls himself a devout Christian.

* **The Ship Mercy**

Without mercy they go to Africa and taking people, ripping them off their villages and forcing them over to your country.

* **The Grace of God**

They have shown no grace on the slaves that they caught.

Unrighteous judgment leads to slander. Slander tells you, you are not doing in love and it goes to idolatrous condemnation. The immediate context here is two, teaching but more important is about relationship with one another. The key application here is how we relate to one another.

We are unable to make neutral judgments. What is the evidence of it? Very simple, look at how the Christian church is split, we have protestants, Catholics, charismatics, evangelical. We have the anti-denominational movements, we have this and that. Every church thinks that they are right and the others are wrong.

We all need a filter. We need a center to hold us, no matter how smart we are, how much we know our bible; you will move to become judgmental. Our past experiences put us in bondage, our experiences, our own desires, and the church background. The filter is the gospel; you anchor it with the gospel. The gospel will tell you two things importantly:

1. Whatever you do you do it to glorify God that is the chief aim of man.
2. Glorifying God is about loving your neighbor, insuring relationships are handled carefully. So when we look at another person before you quickly want to judge, we ask ourselves do I love him, is my action going to love him, are the words going to really say that. Am I condemning him?

There are things that involves in righteous judgment.

1. Studying scripture in its totality. Anybody can pick any verse to say anything you want nowadays and that is the reason behind the growing number of denominations. There is where the heresy comes about.
2. We have to pray and let the spirit discern you. You have to talk to people and most importantly what Matthew 7 is saying, Romans 2 is saying, go and look at our own life first, do not judge others.

Righteous judgment leads to gentler words which lead to done humbly to love your neighbor. That is why the cross is so important. There is where the cross is so central because when everyone do something, you tell yourself Jesus died for me I am alive.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

John Wesley the founder of Methodism and George Whitfield. It is Calvinism versus Arminianism. They both had a fight about theology which was so bad. John Wesley called all Calvinist heretics; the language was really-really bad. In their later years they made up because they realized they have to love one another and they have to pursue God. George Whitefield gave two rings to the Wesley brothers, one to Charles and one to John and he says this.

*“In token of my indissoluble union with them (John and Charles Wesley) in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our differences in judgment about some particular points of doctrine.”*

He was very sick at that time and then he died. John Wesley spoke at his funeral. He said,

*“There are many doctrines of a less essential nature, with regard to which even the sincere child of God are and have been divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may “agree to disagree”. But meantime, let us hold fast the essentials of “the faith which once delivered the saints,” and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on, at all times, and in all places!”*

He said two things here. His fundamental point was:

1. “Give God all the glory of whatever is good in man”
2. Think better of everyone; do not think negative about everyone. When you judge someone try to extract some good of that person.
3. “In the business of salvation, set Christ as high and man as low as possible.”

We are here to set Christ as high and man as low as possible and this is how we judge.

We have two choices to judge

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| --- | --- |
| * Righteous judgment | * Unrighteous judgment |
| * Gentler words | * Slander |
| * Done humbly to love your neighbor | * Not done in love |
| * Aim to glorify God and rest in His ultimate judgment | * Idolatrous condemnation |