

**HOW TO QUIT PLAYING GOD**  
**Developing a Faith That Works - Part 11 of 15**

**James 4:11-12**

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*"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're not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it] There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, [God] the one who is able to save and destroy. But you -- who are you to judge your neighbor?"* James says that the way we play God is by judging other people. Anytime I judge you, anytime you judge me, we're playing God. It's only God's responsibility to judge other people. I want us to look at Why we judge other people, Why shouldn't we judge, When is it wrong to Judge other people, and How do you break the habit of judging other people. You'll be a lot happier if you learn how to deal with this issue. Romans 2:3 *"So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them, and yet do the same thing, do you think you will escape God's judgment?"* Paul says that one of the reasons we tend to judge other people is to excuse our own faults. You think by pointing the finger at somebody else, God is going to forget what you've done, or when you point out how somebody

else has fallen then you don't look so bad. We use it as an excuse to blame others. We love to accuse others and excuse ourselves.

How do we do that? How do we excuse our sins? We do that by relabeling them... "I'm not a gossip, I'm just sharing a concern," "I'm not lazy, I'm just mellow," "I'm not negative, I'm realistic," "I'm not unreliable, I'm flexible."

We have different terminology. We excuse our sins by relabeling them. "I'm not critical, I'm discerning." We all do that.

## **WHY SHOULD I NOT JUDGE OTHERS**

James gives us three reasons why we shouldn't judge other people.

### **1. It's unchristian**

v. 11 *"Brothers, do not slander one another... anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law."* Actually when it says "judges him" it mentions the word "brother" again. "Brother" is used three times in this passage. Why? In the first place we shouldn't judge one another because we're all part of the same family. We're brothers. When I see another Christian stumble or fall or have a tough time, I shouldn't rejoice in that because they're family. I should be concerned about it. I think a lot of

times we get a little bit of glee out of it.

I heard about a guy who came to a pastor one time and said, "I don't have but one talent." The pastor asked, "What's your talent?" The man said, "I have the gift of criticism." The gift of criticism does not come from the Holy Spirit but from the devil. The pastor was wise and thought about the parable in the Bible and said, "The guy who had only one talent went out and buried it. Maybe that's what you ought to do with yours."

## **2, It's unloving**

We shouldn't judge others because it's unloving. "*...who judges speaks against the Law...*" Is it illegal? Is there a law against judging in the United States?

He's talking about the Royal Law. James 2:8 "*Whenever I judge you, I'm breaking the Law.*" What law is it I'm breaking? He's mentioned it

earlier. He mentions it two or three times in the book. James 2:8 "*If you really keep the Royal Law found in Scripture love your neighbor as yourself.*"

James says if you do this you're doing right. When I judge you, I'm breaking the Royal Law -- the law of love -- "*Love your neighbor as*

*yourself.*" We say, "It's just words and people will forget them." People don't

forget words. You always remember them. It's unchristian and unloving.

### **3. It's unjustified**

*"There's only one lawgiver and one judge."* The word "lawgiver" is used six times in the Old Testament and only once in the New Testament. The six times in the Old Testament it refers to God. The same thing here -- it's referring to God. Only God has the right to judge. It's in God's job description. It's not in your job description to judge people. He has not commissioned you to talk to everybody about everybody else.

One of the greatest weaknesses in people is we tend to generalize people by just one mistake. If they make one mistake we write off their whole personality. If a guy makes a foolish mistake, we say, "He's a fool." Not necessarily. Maybe he just made a foolish mistake in one particular area.

### **III. WHEN IS IT WRONG TO JUDGE OTHERS?**

There are seven places in Scripture where it says it is wrong to judge. The Scripture does say in some places that we are to judge certain things. We're to judge ourselves, and we're to judge certain matters: Scripture does say time and time again we are to judge the actions of our self and other Christians to save them and God's church from destruction. But there's

times it says, don't Judge.

1. Matthew 7:3-5 *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother 'Let me take the speck out of your eye' when there's a plank in your own eye. You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye and then you can see clearly to remove the speck in your brother's eye."* Jesus is talking here in His famous Sermon on the Mount. This is a good example of the fact that Jesus told jokes. Hebrew humor is humor by exaggeration. If you read through the Sermon on the Mount it has a number of laugh lines in it, this being one of them.

He said this in exaggeration and I'm sure the disciples got a big laugh.

Imagine two guys: one guy has got some sawdust in his eye and the other has a telephone pole hanging out of his eye. Later on He says, "Just imagine: it's easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than somebody with a lot of money to make it into heaven just on his own money." That's Hebrew humor -- humor by exaggeration.

Jesus is making a point here with humor. He's saying **it's wrong to judge**

**when it blinds me to my own faults.** If judging you causes me to not look at myself realistically, then it's wrong. We are great speck analyzers, nitpicking specks when we have a logjam in our own eye.

The inevitable result of being a judgmental person is in v. 2 *"In the same way you judge others, you'll be judged."* If you are critical to other people, you'll be criticized. So it's wrong when you practice the same sin. It's wrong when it blinds you to your own faults.

2. James 4:11 *"Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it."* If I judge you and the law has already said, "Don't do it," I'm saying I'm more important than the law. I'm putting myself above the law. I'm making myself the law. I'm the creator and judge of all things. **It's wrong to judge when it causes you to speak evil about another Christian.** Anything that causes me to speak evil about another Christian, maybe to ruin their reputation, is wrong. We are to hate wrong but we're to love people even when they are doing wrong. Ephesians 4:29 says we're always to speak positively, speak only those

Things that build up and encourage. Christians ought to be known for their encouragement not their criticism. We don't need nagging; we need encouragement. We know what's right, we just need encouragement to do it. I would like to be known as an encourager. I think that's what God wants us to be.

3. I Corinthians 4:5 *"Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time.*

[Circle "nothing"] *Wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts."* To

understand this you have to understand the verses around it. What is Paul talking about? He's talking about motives. Everywhere Paul went his motives were constantly being challenged, questioned. He is saying **we have no right to judge other people's motives and question why they do what they do.** He says, *"wait until the Lord comes."* It's premature to judge people's motives. Why is it premature? Nobody really knows what's in somebody else's heart. You can guess but you don't know. To judge somebody means we're judging without all the facts. Only God has the right to judge because he can see in the heart. The Bible says that someday

when the Lord comes back, *"he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's heart."* I have a hard enough time just trying to figure out my own motives about a lot of things, much less making a good guess at yours. So do you. A lot of times we don't know why we do what we do. What makes us think we can figure out what makes other people do what they do? We have a hard time just judging our own selves. But one day it's all going to be brought to light. You can never judge anybody's motives, what they're doing. You don't know what's going on.

## **HOW DO YOU BREAK THE HABIT OF JUDGING OTHERS**

### **1. Remember that I'll be judged by the same standards that I use to judge other people.**

If you want something to help you be a little more considerate, look at Matthew 7:1-2 *"Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others."* I'm in trouble! The way we judge others -- the same measure we mete out is the same measure we get back. If you want something to help you break the habit of talking critically about other

people, remember that. What you dish out will be dished back to you.

What you sow you're going to reap.

## **2. Remember that each of us is accountable to God.**

*"Every one of us, then, will have to give an account of himself to God. So then, let us stop judging one another."*

You're not accountable to me in the ultimate sense of every area of your life. I don't have to report to you. But one day we're all going to stand before God and then God is going to know our motives. How's God going to judge? He's going to judge honestly, fairly, truthfully. It won't be based on heresy, rumors, third hand passed down stuff, but based on the facts. He will judge impartially. In the court system it seems some people get off lighter than others. Sometimes it just doesn't seem fair. That's true.

The Bible never said that the world would be fair. But one day God is going to settle the score. Why is it that people who do all kinds of evil things get away with it at times? Why is that? Is it fair that Hitler could ruin so many lives and then just take his own life? The Bible says that on the other side, God settles the score. One day we'll all be judged by the Lord and we'll give an account to Him.

### **3. Remember how much God has been merciful to me.**

James 2:13 *"Mercy triumphs over judgement."* There is a principle greater than criticism. It's the principle of forgiveness. The principle of mercy.

Jesus said, *"Blessed are the merciful."* Matthew 18 is the story of the unforgiving servant. He owed \$50,000 to his master. His master forgave him. He went out and found the guy that owed him \$5 and strangled the guy because he wouldn't pay him. When the master heard about it he took the servant and said, "If that's the way you want to play the game, OK. You're unforgiving, it will be unforgiven of you." The Bible says we're to be Merciful because God has given us so much mercy. The reason why I have to be patient with you is because God is patient with me. The reason you have to be patient with me is because God is patient with you. That's the way it goes.

I am challenging all to Make a Pledge with me this morning from a song by Rich Mullins my Brothers Keeper: Repeat after me:

My friends ain't the way I wish they were

They are just the way they are

And I will be my brother's keeper

Not the one who judges him

I won't despise him for his weakness

I won't regard him for his strength

I won't take away his freedom

I will help him learn to stand

And I will, I will be my brother's keeper

Praise team come up Front:

Conclusion: Judging is an area that every one of us have to deal with -- a critical attitude, being judgmental. If you want to find some fault in somebody you can.

Everybody is imperfect. It's all in what you decide to look at. If you choose to make friends in life one of the things you have to do is overlook their faults. Love the good parts in them and overlook the bad parts. If you want to have a successful marriage you have to learn to stop criticizing and questioning your mate's motives. Look at the good parts in their life. Why

do we spend an entire session just on this? Because it's one of the most common problems. James says it's really playing God. Only God has the right to judge, evaluate and criticize someone. He's got all the facts. He's impartial. We're not. It's not our place. It will be a liberating experience when you realize that God has not called you to judge other people but He's called you to be accountable to Him. Understand also, sin is a fire-and when we see our brother and sister on fire we have a obligation to douse them with water. Would you not want some-one to tell you that you were on fire? Maybe, you are on fire today, God has spoken to you this morning by telling you to put out that fire by accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior by coming up front as we stand to sing!

#### Prayer

Would you pray a prayer like this in your heart, "Lord, help me to quit playing God. Help me this week to not be critical and judgmental, to watch my mouth and not gossip and pass on damaging information, but to build up others and to share only those things that encourage and lift up. Lord, thank You for your grace in my life. Thank You that You don't give me what I deserve but You give me what I need. Help me to do that to others,

to pass on to them what they need. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen."