



James 4:11-17

James 4:11-17 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? (13) Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; (14) whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. (15) Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” (16) But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (17) Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Things To Note About This Passage:

1. To speak evil of someone usually means to slander someone when they are not there to defend themselves.
2. Verses 12-16 fit in perfectly with Prov 27:1: Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.
3. Jesus’ teaching in Luke 12:16-21 is worth comparing with verses 12-16.
4. The traders of the ancient world were much like our business people today. They had travel plans, time frames, market projections, and profit forecasts as indicated in vs. 13.
5. “Boasting” (vs. 16) means braggadocio. It was originally applied to wandering quacks who offered shonky cures, and thus boasted of things they were unable to do.

What This Passage Tells Us:

1. To slander someone means to become their judge.
2. Disregarding God’s law of love, a law which takes away our right to slander others, puts us above His law, and therefore makes us judges of His law.
3. The real judge is God who will have the last word on saving or destroying.
4. Self-confidence is condemned. Nobody knows the future, and to confidently boast about future plans without realising that God may have other plans is foolish.
5. It is okay to make plans, but such plans ought to be submitted to the will of God, recognising His right to make any adjustments He deems necessary. God is sovereign.
6. If you are aware there is something good that you should do and fail to do it, that is sin.

Questions For Discussion:

What practical steps can be taken to make sure that we don’t commit the sin of slandering others?

Why is it best to leave the judging up to God?

In what ways do people commonly boast about the future?

How can we avoid boasting about the future without adding “if it is God’s will” on the end of everything we say?