

**Men to Men Ministry**  
**Lesson Nineteen in the Letter of James**  
**Godly Purity**

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## James 4:11-12 NASB

**Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the Law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy; but who are you to judge your neighbor?**

### Introduction

This lesson is from the Men to Men Ministry focusing on James 4:11-12 NASB, which advises against speaking against one another. It discusses issues such as quarrels, conflicts, selfish desires, and the importance of humility and submission to God. The lesson highlights the negative impact of slander, gossip, and criticism, noting that a significant portion of communication is negative.

In the fourth chapter, several issues are discussed regarding the church of the Diaspora. James mentions quarrels and conflicts resulting from selfish desires. An important distinction in James' writing is between motives and ethics.

Ethics are shaped by society and culture, reflecting our response to established expectations within a community. Conversely, morals are most associated with individual beliefs and standards.

**Ethics:** These are guidelines or rules provided by an external source, such as a professional code of conduct, society, or an organization. They are often formalized in a written document, e.g., laws, corporate policies, or professional standards. Ethics are usually consistent within a certain context but can vary widely between different societies or professions. Ethics are primarily objective.

**Morals:** These are individual principles or beliefs about what is right and wrong, often influenced by culture, religion, personal experiences, and upbringing. Morals are subjective and can differ greatly from person to person. They are more about personal character and often derived from a personal sense of conscience.

In essence, while ethics are often externally imposed and formal, morals are internal and personal. Both play a critical role in guiding behavior and decision-making.

For James the center of the head or logical home of understanding was the center of ethical behavior. Ethical behavior was driven by the law, and morality was from the heart.

The head demands compliance, while the heart draws and pulls. But as we will see, both ethical behavior and moral behavior can, and does have their own inherent problems.

### **ETHICAL Behavior violation**

There are a variety of reasons people might violate ethical guidelines or engage in unethical behavior.

- **Personal Gain:** The allure of financial rewards, power, or status can drive people to act unethically.
- **Pressure:** Social, professional, or economic pressures can make people feel they have no other choice but to bend or break the rules.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Sometimes, individuals might not fully understand the ethical guidelines or the consequences of their actions.
- **Rationalization:** People often justify unethical behavior by convincing themselves that their actions are justifiable or not really wrong.
- **Cultural Factors:** In some contexts, unethical behavior might be normalized or even encouraged, making it harder for individuals to adhere to ethical standards.
- **Poor Organizational Culture:** If an organization lacks clear ethical guidelines or does not enforce them consistently, employees might feel less compelled to follow them.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** When personal interests conflict with professional responsibilities, it can lead to ethical breaches.
- **Lack of Consequences:** If unethical behavior goes unpunished, it can create a perception that such actions are acceptable or won't lead to repercussions.

Each case of ethical violation is unique, and often it's a combination of factors rather than a single cause that leads to such behavior. It's important to cultivate an environment that supports and promotes ethical conduct to mitigate these risks.

### **MORAL Behavior excuses**

People may violate moral principles for various reasons. Here are some common ones:

- **Self-Interest:** Personal desires or needs may override moral considerations, leading individuals to act in ways that benefit themselves, even if it harms others.
- **Rationalization:** People often justify their actions by convincing themselves that what they are doing is not really wrong or that it's for a greater good.
- **Social Influence:** Peer pressure, societal norms, or the desire to fit in can lead individuals to compromise their morals.

- **Emotional State:** Strong emotions like anger, jealousy, or fear can cloud judgment and lead to actions that violate one's morals.
- **Lack of Moral Awareness:** Sometimes, individuals may not fully understand the moral implications of their actions or may not have a well-developed moral compass.
- **Situational Factors:** Specific circumstances or contexts might make it easier for people to ignore their morals, especially if they believe they won't be caught or held accountable.
- **Addiction or Compulsion:** Conditions like addiction can drive individuals to act against their moral principles in pursuit of the addictive substance or behavior.
- **Moral Disengagement:** People may mentally distance themselves from the consequences of their actions, making it easier to engage in behavior they would normally consider immoral.

It's important to recognize that moral behavior is deeply personal and influenced by a complex mix of internal and external factors. Each individual's moral compass is unique, shaped by their experiences, beliefs, and values.

**James is showing us through examples and rhetorical questions, that the Christian life is more than ethical constraints but more about moral responses.**

One psychologist suggests almost 80% of all communication is Negative.

When you hear these names what word comes to mind:

Attila the HUN	500,000	The HUN. The conqueror
Paul Pot Political Murderer	2,000,000	Political murderer
Benedict Arnold	100	in one battle. betrayal
Judas Ascariot	One	man
Joseph Stalin	20,000,000	
Mao	10,000,000	
Adolf Hitler	6,000,000	
Jack the Ripper..	5	

The crusades, the great European holy war of Christianity. 1 and 9 million dead.

Should we not speak against these notorious vehicles of evil? James called some in the church Adulteresses, Murderers, Sinners, and now Slanderers, gossips, Critics.

Two questions must be made from this portion of scripture: are slander, gossip and criticism a moral decision or an ethical one? And the second why do we continually do it?

## Psychology of Gossip

In Psychology all behavior can be divided into three overlapping models:

- Positive behavior is to be examined, and encouraged.
- Neutral behavior is to be understood and tolerated.

- Negative behavior is to analyzed and discouraged.

Therefore, is Gossip, criticism and slander positive, neutral, or negative.

### Reasons for Gossip and speaking against one another

- To boost self-esteem - It makes you feel better about yourself if you are better than someone else.
- To fit in socially - If you isolate someone else you increase your position with the remaining others
- Information gathering - First form of understanding others.
- Social introduction - It levels the interaction to discover a commonality.
- Distraction - A form of entertainment or deflection from self
- Connection - To discover things in common
- Release of frustration - Voicing displeasure at someone who has ignored, defamed, or criticized you
- Jealousy - personal feelings of insecurity, fear, concern or envy over a lack of personal possession or safety.
- Distinction - To set yourself apart, show superiority.

## James 4:11-12 Commentary

I know the admonition of James is pointed directly at the church and most likely a specific part of the church this can be understood from the three cases found in portion of scripture: ONE ANOTHER, BRETHERN, BROTHER. Can we therefore ok then to slander, gossip and criticize anyone outside of the church?

### Illustration

Late 50s early 60s there was a large upswell of faith healers. Great campaigns where there were even greater outpourings of God's Spirit upon those who came to hear and be blessed. There were reports of great miracles, of healings, of demons being cast out. They emphasized direct personal experiences with God. Conversely there was a tendency for these leaders toward excess and sin.

They fed on the notoriety and the recognition and associated wealth of "THEIR MINISTRIES." They fed on the attention for themselves. Flashy suits and ever-increasing need for theatrics. ALL WAS NOT GOOD IN THE HOUSE OF HEALING.

Rumors started to follow these HEALERS. Rumors of grand wealth. Rumors of improper relationships. Rumors of wanton indulgences. They would counter the rumors by saying and even proclaiming their life as examples of God's grace and Mercy. The miracles continued and they would tell themselves God is using them as flawed instruments. It became an moral excuse to go on being less than perfect. So I might as well continue in these excesses. God is winking at me, saying it was ok to sin as long as they produced. ULTIMATELY most were destroyed by their own failures.

Was the rumors, gossip, and criticism allowed?

James was addressing the issue of talking among church members in a way that involves slander, gossip, and criticism without directly addressing the individuals involved. He emphasized the importance of confronting sin within the church rather than discussing it behind someone's back. James pointed out that private conversations about others, without their presence to defend themselves, were causing dissension, quarrels, and conflict within the church. The problem was not with those who were falling short of ideals, but with the act of discussing these shortcomings without resolution.

## **THE DEVIL, IF HE CAN NOT CAUSE A TOTAL FAILURE, WILL KNIPP AT THE EDGES TO LIMIT GROWTH.**

This admonishment was not exclusive to the New Testament. The Jewish faith at the time of James' writing the predominant view was as long as there is no explicit forbiddance in the Scripture it was therefore approved. It had degenerated into a ETHICS based religion. The TORAH or the LAW did not include any restrictions on slander, rumors, or criticism. There are two references in the Pslams:

### **PSALM 50**

*19 You use your mouth for evil  
and harness your tongue to deceit.  
20 You sit and testify against your brother  
and slander your own mother's son.  
21 When you did these things and I kept silent,  
you thought I was exactly like you.  
But I now arraign you  
and set my accusations before you.  
When you go along you are complicit with the sin.,*

### **Psalm 101:5**

*Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret,  
I will put to silence;  
whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart,  
I will not tolerate*

Further Paul would make references a few year later after James was written, but was in association with the unredeemed and part of the world

### **Romans 1: 29-31**

*They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are **gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.***

### **2 Corinthians 12:20**

20 For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, **slander, gossip**, arrogance and disorder.

And Peter wrote about.

### **I Peter 2:1**

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and **slander** of every kind.

## What is wrong with slander, gossip and social criticism?

### Slander

- **Damage to Reputation:** Slander involves making false statements about someone that can severely harm their reputation, leading to personal and professional consequences.
- **Emotional Distress:** Being the target of slander can cause significant emotional pain, stress, and anxiety.
- **Legal Consequences:** Slander is considered a form of defamation, and it is illegal. The person who slanders another can face lawsuits, fines, and other legal repercussions.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Slander undermines trust within communities, workplaces, and relationships. It creates an environment where people are cautious and mistrustful.
- **Unfair Advantages:** In some cases, slander is used to gain an unfair advantage, whether in business, politics, or personal relationships, which is unethical and unjust.

Spreading false information about someone not only harms the individual but also damages the overall integrity and trust within society. It's essential to be mindful and responsible with our words to maintain a just and respectful environment.

### Gossip

Gossip, while often seen as a harmless pastime, can have several negative impacts:

- **Harm to Reputation:** Gossip can spread false or misleading information about someone, damaging their reputation and causing unnecessary harm.
- **Emotional Impact:** Being the subject of gossip can lead to feelings of betrayal, anxiety, and distress. It can affect an individual's mental and emotional well-being.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Gossiping creates an environment of mistrust. If people know that others talk behind their backs, it can weaken relationships and reduce trust within a community or workplace.

- **Conflict and Division:** Gossip can create or exacerbate conflicts and divisions among individuals or groups. It can foster a toxic environment where people are pitted against each other.
- **Lack of Productivity:** In professional settings, gossip can distract from work, reduce productivity, and create a negative atmosphere.
- **Moral and Ethical Concerns:** Engaging in gossip often involves violating ethical principles such as honesty, respect, and kindness. It can undermine one's moral integrity.

Ultimately, while gossip might seem like a casual way to pass the time, its consequences can be quite harmful to individuals and the broader community. It's important to strive for open, honest, and respectful communication instead.

## Social Criticism

Social criticism can be beneficial when it's constructive and aimed at fostering positive change. However, it can also have several negative aspects:

- **Destructive Nature:** When social criticism is harsh, unfair, or derogatory, it can harm individuals and communities rather than encourage improvement.
- **Negativity and Division:** Constant negative criticism can create a culture of negativity and division, leading to polarized societies where constructive dialogue becomes difficult.
- **Discouragement:** Excessive or unjustified criticism can demoralize individuals or groups, reducing their motivation to strive for positive change or improvement.
- **Lack of Constructive Solutions:** Social criticism that focuses solely on problems without offering solutions can be unproductive. Effective criticism should ideally be accompanied by constructive suggestions.
- **Bias and Prejudice:** Social criticism can sometimes be rooted in bias, prejudice, or a lack of understanding, leading to unfair or harmful judgments.
- **Erosion of Trust and Collaboration:** Negative social criticism can erode trust and hinder collaboration among different groups, making it harder to work together towards common goals.

While social criticism can be a powerful tool for highlighting issues and prompting change, it's important to approach it thoughtfully and constructively to avoid these negative consequences. Being respectful, fair, and solution-oriented can make social criticism more effective and positive.

## Summary

The document discusses godly purity, focusing on James 4:11-12 NASB, and addresses issues like quarrels, conflicts, slander, gossip, and criticism within the church.

1. Focus on James 4:11-12 NASB: The lesson advises against speaking against one another and emphasizes the importance of humility and submission to God, highlighting the negative impact of slander, gossip, and criticism.
2. Ethics vs. Morals: Ethics are external guidelines provided by society or organizations, while morals are personal principles influenced by culture, religion, and personal experiences.
3. Violations of Ethical Behavior: People might violate ethical guidelines for reasons such as personal gain, pressure, lack of awareness, rationalization, cultural factors, poor organizational culture, conflicts of interest, and lack of consequences.
4. Excuses for Moral Behavior Violations: Individuals may violate moral principles due to self-interest, rationalization, social influence, emotional state, lack of moral awareness, situational factors, addiction, or moral disengagement.
5. Psychology of Gossip: Gossip, criticism, and slander are categorized as negative behaviors and can be driven by reasons such as boosting self-esteem, fitting in socially, information gathering, social introduction, distraction, connection, release of frustration, jealousy, and distinction.
6. James' Admonition: James emphasizes the importance of confronting sin within the church directly rather than discussing it behind someone's back, as private conversations about others can cause dissension and conflict.
7. Biblical References: The document references Psalms, Romans, and 2 Corinthians to highlight the negative impact of slander, gossip, and criticism, and to emphasize the importance of avoiding these behaviors.<sup>1314</sup>
8. Negative Impacts of Slander and Gossip: Slander and gossip can damage reputations, cause emotional distress, have legal consequences, erode trust, and create conflicts and divisions within communities.