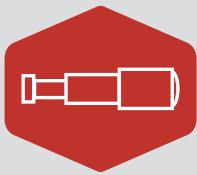




## Lesson 11: Slander, Judgement, and Presumptuous Living

**Main Idea:** In this section, James warns against the sin of speaking evil against others or judging them. And he gives practical advice regarding how to plan for the future. In this lesson, you will discover James' instructions for everyday living.

**Scripture:** James 4:11-17



### The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

*What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.*

In these verses, James is saying that you, after being cleansed by God, are not to go out and speak ill of another person. If you do that, you are violating God's law in two respects. You are violating the law of love for your neighbor. And secondly, you are violating the law which says God alone is the Judge. You are not in a place to judge another person. When James speaks of slander, he is talking about someone who speaks against his brother or judges him. Someone who is close to God does not speak in a harmful manner about someone else. James opposes this type of speech because he feels it destroys the lives of people with whom you are supposed to be in community. James indicates that slander is a sinful activity which pulls others down rather than building them up in love.

As believer, you are not commissioned to judge others. James tells the reader that only the lawgiver, God himself, can judge. The term *lawgiver* is used

six times in the Old Testament and only once in the New Testament. James teaches that only the lawgiver is qualified to judge the law, quoting from Deuteronomy 32:39 which says that in judging others, we take upon ourselves a role belonging only to God.

This passage in James also considers three specific sins which prevent planning for the future according to God’s will. First is the sin of presumption. Presumption denies who you are, who God is, and how much you need God every day. Second is the sin of commission (errors you commit such as boasting). Here James uses a word that describes a person who boasts of things he is unable to do. This sin is rooted in the thinking you have the ability to control your own destiny. The word “boasting” only appears twice in the New Testament, in James and in 1 John 2:16 where it is translated as “the pride of life.”

Third is the sin of omission (good deeds you omit, without depending on God). This is the sin of failing to do what is right. The last paragraph of chapter 4 is dealing with entrepreneurs and movers, the independent, middle class businessman who is out to get rich quickly. These verses represent the newly rich in quest of more wealth.

But James is not on an anti-rich kick. He simply requires our accountability. It is obvious from these verses that James is speaking to two groups of people: First, the merchant class who are in pursuit of wealth and, second, the wealthy farmers and landowners. James addresses the sin of presumptuousness that causes boasting about their business deals, the money they have, and what they purchase with it. James makes it clear that you have no control over the future. One commentator had this to say about boasting, “In the broader Greco-Roman culture, the ‘braggart who spews forth a vapid arrogance was the subject of much moral discourse, and this denigrated character is also treated in Jewish Wisdom literature as an object of scorn (e.g., Proverbs 21:24; cf. Johnson, 297).”<sup>1</sup> The antidote is to commit yourself to the Lord and to doing His will. And doing His will requires being simultaneously sensitive to the world around you and to the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

---

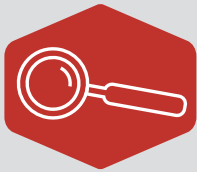
<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, “James,” 13:260



### **My Lens (Eyeglasses)**

*What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.*

- When you slander another person, you are in violation of God's law (4:11-12).
- Your life as a believer should be lived with eternity in focus (4:13-14).
- As a believer, our present and future is in the protective care of the heavenly Father (4:15).
- As a believer, you should not live a presumptuous life, but your life should be lived with the projection of what God's will is for you (4:16).
- As a believer, you sin when you fail to do right (4:17).



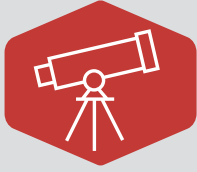
### **The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)**

*How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.*

### **Application:**

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
  - » Who appears in this passage?
  - » Where is this passage taking place?
  - » When is this passage occurring?
  - » Why is this passage important?

- » What is happening in this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- » How does this passage apply to my life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Read James 4:13-17. What can you learn about planning?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Read Luke 12:16-21. What does Jesus teach about wise planning?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being great and 4 being poor, rate yourself on how well you plan. Write out a plan to improve.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Describe a situation in your life when you committed the sins of presumption, commission, and omission. How did the Holy Spirit deal with you? What was the result?



## Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

*How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.*

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



## Using My *FireBible*

*Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.*

- James 4:11. What are some things that are essential to spiritual victory and maturity?

- James 4:15. Why should you be committed to God's plan for your life?
  
- James 4:16. Describe boasting in your own words. Why is it dangerous?
  
- James 4:17. What are sins of omission?