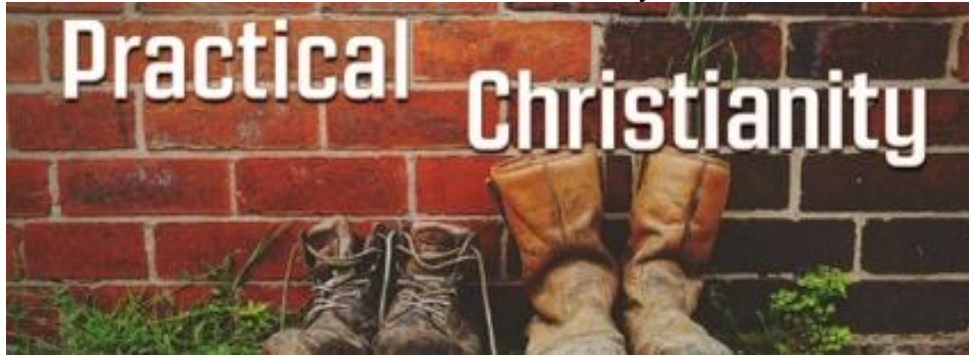


## “Taming the Tongue,” James 4:11-12

1.22.20

We continue in our series we’ve called: “Practical Christianity.”



I love this picture because it’s a “boots on the ground” type of image. That’s what the book of James is... It’s “boots on the ground,” “how to be a Christian” kind of book. It’s very, very practical. In fact, it’s so practical it hurts. It hurts because when we read the book of James we begin to see underneath the mask and into the TRUE SELF. James pulls the mask off of all of us and we see the REAL YOU and the REAL ME! Tonight, we’ll see this again as we talk about being THE JUDGE. See my Judge’s bench here...

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### **James 4:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

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Several weeks ago, we talked about the power of the tongue and we’re going to return to that theme tonight...so, (please pardon the pun)...but, this message is going to hit us right in the mouth. Let me go back for a moment to what we saw with the power of the tongue in James 3. Because this is really important for us to remember, and is the foundation for our text tonight.

### **James 3:3-6**

<sup>3</sup> If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. <sup>4</sup> Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,<sup>[a]</sup> and set on fire by hell.<sup>[b]</sup>

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The tongue...that’s where slander comes from...speaking evil (verse 11 of our text), against our brothers and sisters... Remember, our “speech,” what rolls off of our tongues is what’s in our hearts. For we know, “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

I’ve shared this before...but it’s so good. The great preacher of yesteryear, J. Vernon McGee says: **“The tongue is a badge which you and I wear—it identifies us. It is the greatest index of life. It is the table of contents to our lives. Our tongues give us away; they tell who we are.”** J. Vernon McGee

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Listen, here’s the truth...we talk about what rolls off of our tongues as being the issue...and that’s true...but, where do those words come from? Our hearts? You see, there is no difference in the heart and the tongue. Whatever is inside of you and me is going to come out of our mouths. And so, our tongues reveal what we REALLY believe. But church family, if we’re saved, don’t we have

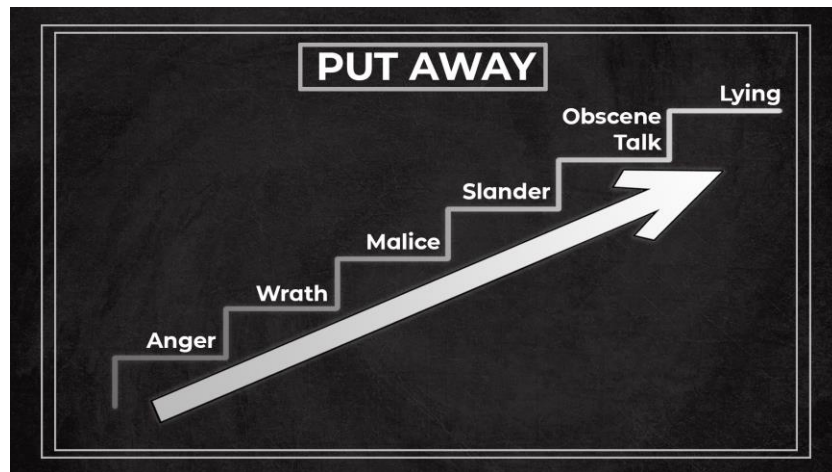
the ability to control the tongue? Yes! Why? Because we have been given (as salvation) a new heart and with that new heart comes the Holy Spirit to help us...thus with the new heart we get a new tongue...and so, our speech should reveal that changed heart. But, it's a choice... We choose what we speak. Now, **look back at verse 11**, chapter 4 and let's break this down... take a look at the first part of verse 11:

**James 4:11**

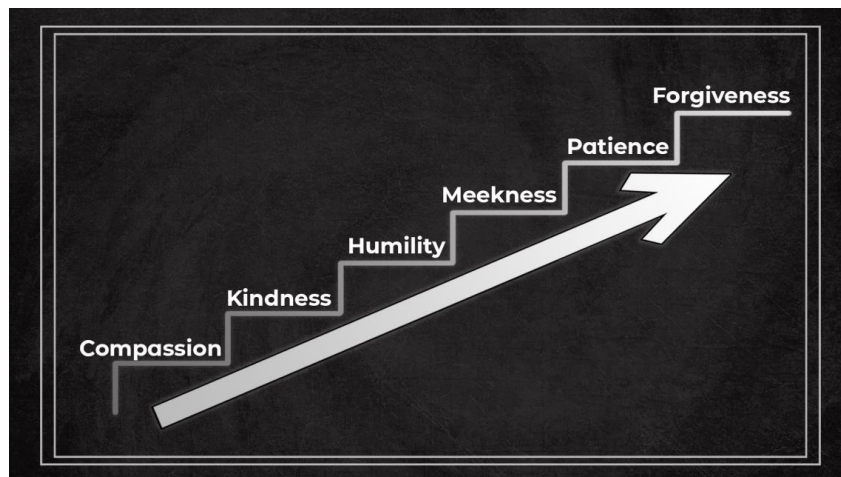
<sup>11</sup> Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.

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This is really amazing! It happens often...this is what we've been talking about on Sundays in Colossians 3. We've been talking about the STEPS of a believer and what we're to PUT AWAY...



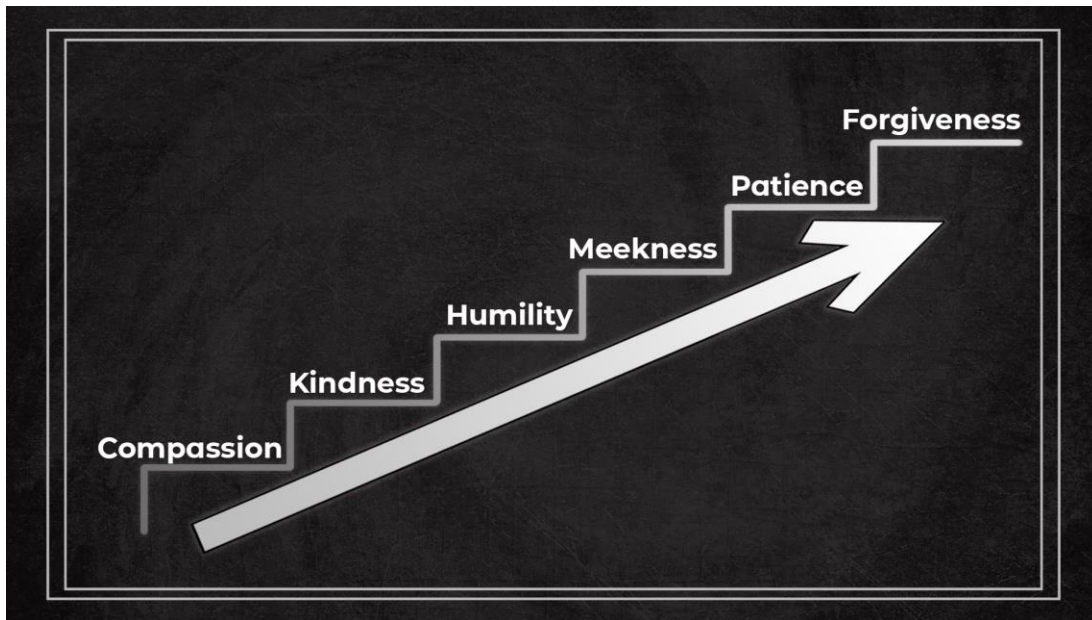
Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying. What is all of that? That's verse 11. Speaking evil of others, right? But, that's NOT how We ARE to be. We are to walk up a different set of stairs... No... We show...



Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness.

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Now think about this...you and I have the option of two sets of stairs...one that we'll call SLANDER and one that we'll call FORGIVENESS. Which one do you take? ANSWER...the one that your heart leads you to... **Where is your heart tonight?** Is it filled with anger and rage or will you let that go and allow your heart to experience the freedom of...see the second set of stairs again...



Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness.

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I'm going to risk being told I'm beating a dead horse...but, I want to show you another set of steps, which you've seen in every service for the past month...



We've been using that picture to represent the steps of Jesus...the path that He's marked out for His followers. The question is...will we choose to walk in those steps? Will we follow Him?

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Listen, we all, intuitively know, that a person who continually speaks evil against another person is not really dealing with a tongue issue, but a what? HEART ISSUE, right? And I want to tell you what the condition of THAT heart is... That heart is filled with PRIDE! Pride that manifests itself in envy and jealousy and ultimately hatred, and it comes out of the mouth in the form of evil, slanderous speech, because we want what we want!

Church, we're all going to have issues with folks from time to time. We're going to have misunderstandings, disagreements, even arguments...but, the question is...will we choose to be mean and hateful and spiteful and vindictive...

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The Apostle Paul is explaining to the Roman church how to get along with others. This is so beautiful... Romans 12, verse 17.

**Romans 12:17-21**

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it<sup>[i]</sup> to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the

Lord.” <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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Heap burning coals...YEAH...God you get ‘em...and I’m going to sit back and watch you do it and laugh. No! That’s not it at all. Back in the first century, you kept coals going all the time... You had to have fire to cook...and if you had no coals, you can’t cook or stay warm in winter... This is teaching that if your enemy comes to you and says, “I’m out of coals”...you HEAP coals of fire on their head. You give your enemy what they don’t deserve...you feed them, give them something to drink, coals to start a fire... You do as Jesus did...you show mercy to those who don’t deserve it.

Listen, there are going to be times...in our flesh, even as Christians...we may speak maliciously toward someone...even slander them...but listen...if you say you are a Christian and this is your pattern of life, you are in grave danger. Why? Because you can’t make this condition the pattern of your life and truly be born again. Let me show you... **Turn to 1 John, chapter 2.**

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John is writing to Christians and he is stating categorically, if we are born again...then as a pattern to our living, we will relate to others in a certain way. Sometimes 1 John is called the “love one another epistle,” and here’s a big reason why...chapter 2, verses 9-11...

### **1 John 2:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him<sup>[b]</sup> there is no cause for stumbling. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

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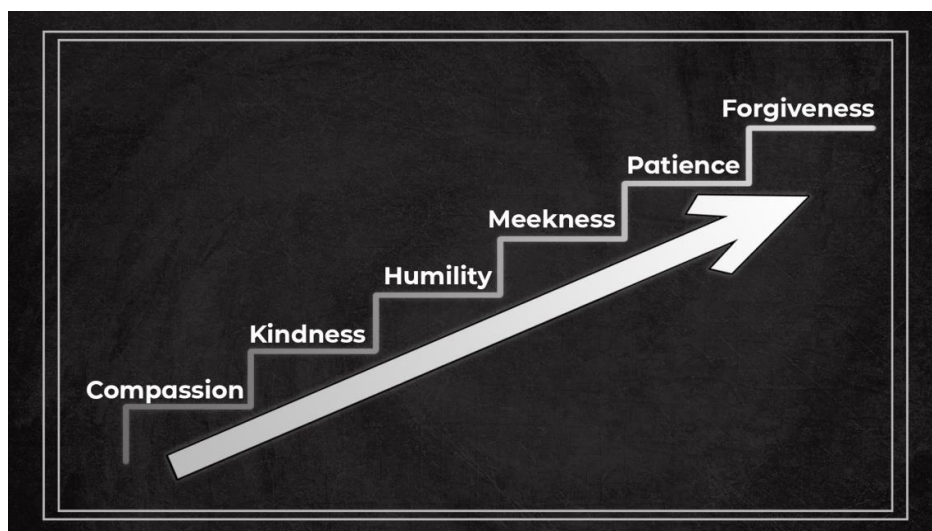
### **Go to chapter 4, verse 20...**

### **1 John 4:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot<sup>[a]</sup> love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

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Listen, if we say we are a believer, it will be shown by how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. So, let me ask you...how do you feel about your brothers and sisters in Christ? Again, let’s be totally honest...there are going to be some brothers or sisters who get on your nerves, or you don’t understand what they’re doing, or thinking. Again, maybe you are further up the steps than they are:



Maybe you're at forgiveness, they're stuck trying to muster up some compassion. Here's the thing...if you've got an issue with a brother or sister in Christ...then Jesus says you are to go to them. Matthew 18:15...

### **Matthew 18:15**

<sup>15</sup> "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

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Many refuse to do that and the angst remains...and eventually that angst turns into JUDGMENT. It's just easier to judge them...

### **James 4:11**

<sup>11</sup> "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."

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What does this mean... "Judge the law"? If you speak evil against your brother, you are judging the Law. Confused. Don't be... Let's break it down.

What is the Law of God? It's the Torah...the Law is found in the OT Torah, which is the first five books of the Bible...written by Moses and principally found in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In fact, "Deuteronomy" means, "repeating of the law." The Law says in Leviticus

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### **Leviticus 19:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> "You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life<sup>[a]</sup> of your neighbor: I am the Lord. <sup>17</sup> "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. <sup>18</sup> "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."

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Now where have you heard that before... "Love your neighbor, as yourself"? Jesus said that, right? We saw this in James 2. We saw this a few weeks ago in our study... Matthew taught this passage. Again, this is boots on the ground, practical living kind of stuff. James was saying, "Don't you dare show partiality toward someone by how they dress or what they have, or how they look." James said what His half-brother, Jesus said... in verse 8... see the screens...

### **James 2:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> "But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

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What does that mean? It means, if you and I don't treat people right, we break the law...and that's OT and NT... OT Law...the 10 commandments...NT law...the ROYAL LAW of Jesus.

Remember, Jesus boiled down the 10 commandments down to just two (2) and this is called the "Royal Law of Jesus." Watch this...chapter 22, verse 34...

### **Matthew 22:34-40**

<sup>34</sup> "But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup> "And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> "And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> "This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> "On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

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**That's the Royal Law...love God...love your neighbor.**

One of the last things Jesus ever said to His disciples was in the upper room right before He went to the Garden of Gethsemane...and what did He say? John 13:34-35 tells us...see the screens:

**John 13:34-35**

<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

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Church family, Jesus called us to love each other... That's the essence of the Law of God...love Him, commandments 1-4, love one another, commandments 5-10, summed up by love God, love your neighbor. **So, here's the point of James 4:11-12... Go back to it.** When we **unfairly judge** someone, we are showing contempt for Jesus...by JUDGING THE LAW.

**James 4:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

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That word: “judge” is present participle, it's one who makes a habitual pattern to condemn other people...judges another. And that's not being like Jesus at all! ...A judge presides and what? Makes judgments and uses a **gavel to levy** the judgment.

Now church, think with me...**who is the ultimate Judge**, Jesus, of course and as believers we will stand before He one day at the **Bema Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5)**...and be “judged” or receive our rewards. While the Lost, will one day, stand before Jesus at the **Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20)** and be judged according to their works and because of their rejection of Jesus, they will be sentenced to Hell.

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Okay...we've got all that, so the question becomes...since Jesus is the ultimate judge, are we to EVER judge? Isn't the mantra of today: “Don't you dare judge me!” This is Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. There's four more verses that follow verse 1.

**Matthew 7:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> “Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup> Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

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Let's see if we can tie this most PRACTICAL teaching together tonight... Church, without question...we have to judge...listen...we have to look at people's lives and make assessments about their lives. We have to determine by how someone is living, whether or not they are saved...meaning...we then would share the Gospel with them... What is more...if we have a brother or sister in Christ and they're in sin... Jesus said in Matthew 18...we're to go them...one on one and show them they're sin and try to win them back. That's showing love... That's Galatians 6:1-3.

**Galatians 6:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> Brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

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So, the issue is NOT judging...but, how we judge...and remembering we're not the ultimate Judge...that's Jesus. The issue is when we take the gavel and unfairly judge... Again, that word: "judge" is present participle, it's one who makes a habitual pattern to condemn other people...judges another.

You see, when you and I unfairly judge...we in essence make up our own laws. We become superior to God's law. It's saying: Give me the GAVEL Jesus...I'm in control! I don't like that person...(are they in overt sin...well no...I just don't like them....I don't like the way they act or they are unkind acting toward my family). Okay...so, you don't like them and now you want to cast sentence on them.

Yes, I'm in charge and I make the rules! Folks, that's the plank syndrome. Picking out specks with planks. You've let their attitude rub off on you and you are in the mud with them. Listen carefully, we're called to love those who hurt us, use us and even persecute us. We're called to love EVEN our enemies.

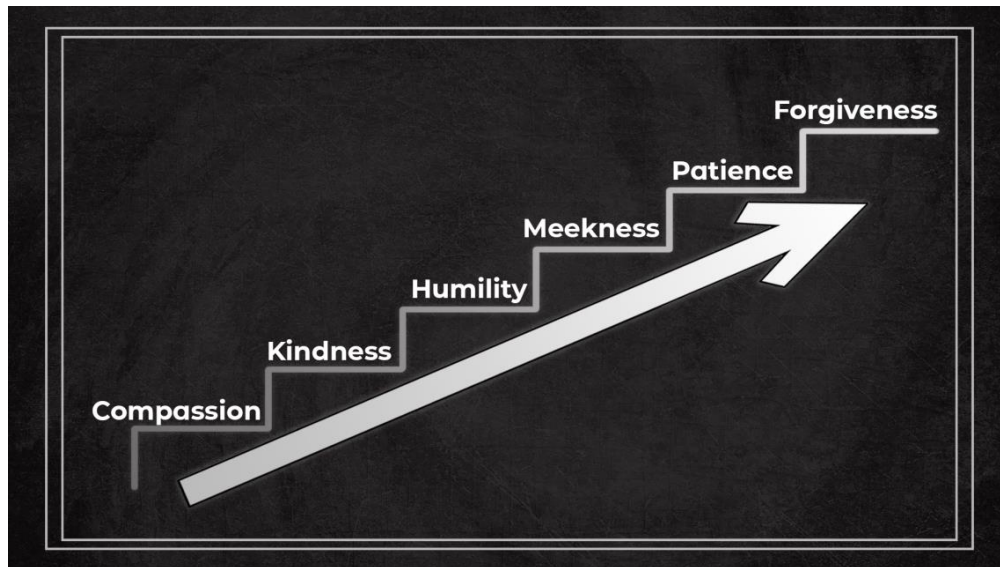
**Can I ask you tonight... Do you have the gavel in your hand?** Are you making the pronouncements and offering the sentences from the bench? Are you the judge? Folks, this is dangerous territory...this looks an awful lot like **Lucifer**. Remember, he wanted to be God. He said in Isaiah 14... **"I will, I will, I will, I will, I will."** That's the sin of pride...It's kicking Jesus out of the Judge's chair. Bible commentator, Matthew Henry sums up James 4:11-12 this way:

**"We are to be sensitive to the good name of our brothers and sisters; when we cannot speak good things, it is better to say nothing than to speak evil. Those who quarrel with their brothers and sisters and condemn them concerning any matter, not determined in the word of God, are bringing dishonor on that word. If people break the law, we may leave the law to judge them; if they do not break it, let us not judge them. Those who are most ready to set themselves up as judges of the law generally fail most in their obedience to it."**  
Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator

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**Church, the lesson from James 4 is this:** we are not to be quick to judge...and if we do judge...if we're trying to lead someone to Christ or we're to restore someone who is believer...we are to do so in love. We are NOT to judge **unfairly** by giving ourselves a mile while only allowing someone else a tiny inch. That's judging unfairly and goes against the Law of God and makes us JUDGE...taking over the bench unjustly!

Church family, the world is watching...it's how we treat one another. The Church has to be a place where there is unity, (as much as it depends on us), kindness, meekness, love...for one another...we should walk the steps...



Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness.

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OTHERWISE...if we don't and we live in anger...waging our tongues...why would anyone want to be part of us?

May we tonight, look into our hearts...that's where it all begins...out of the overflow of the heart, speaks the mouth...we may do some heart-searching, do a little inventory about our tongues, our speech, the things we say, and if we have maliciously spoken evil of someone unfairly, unjustly, without cause, if we have spoken lies, if we have spoken words of hatred or backbiting or gossip, may we confess it to the Lord, repent of it and get out of the Judge's chair.

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