

Jason Smith “Who Made You the Judge?”

Text: James 4:11–12

Series: The War Within

Peace in our relationships begins when we step off the judgment seat and let God be God.

**11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.<sup>[a]</sup> 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?**

James 4:11–12 is built on three escalating ideas:

1. Do not speak evil (sin of the tongue)
2. Do not judge your brother (sin of the heart)
3. There is only one Judge (theological reality)

This is not just behavioral correction...

This is a confrontation of misplaced authority.

**Explain the Moses Seat (SHOW PICTURE)**

Introduction

Family... let me ask you something honestly:

Why do we think it's okay to judge everybody?

Come on now... we all do it.

We judge:

- how people dress
- how they parent
- how they lead
- how they talk
- how they live

We don't even need a courtroom—we carry one in our minds.

If I'm honest, sometimes I feel like I should wear a referee shirt and carry a whistle... because I'm always ready to call a foul on somebody else.

The Christian life is not just about what you do—it's about who sits on the throne of your heart.

And here's the uncomfortable truth:

Many of us say, "Jesus is Lord"...  
But functionally, we still act like we are the judge.

We don't wear robes...  
We don't sit in courtrooms...

But in our hearts—and with our words—we pass verdicts every single day.

And James steps into this moment—not gently, but prophetically—and says:

"You need to step down."

And here's the danger:

Every time you sit in the judge's seat... you are trying to take God off the throne.

And hell loves it when we do that.

So the question today is simple and piercing:

Who made you the judge?

**“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers... There is only one lawgiver and judge... But who are you to judge your neighbor?”** —James 4:11–12

POINT 1: **Judgment is a heart issue, not just a mouth issue**

James says:

**“Do not speak evil against one another.”**

The phrase “speak evil” means:

- to slander
- to criticize
- to tear down
- to attack someone’s character

This is not loving correction.

This is not godly accountability.

This is criticism that flows from pride.

**Slander is pride with a microphone.**

Let’s be real:

We judge others by their actions...

But we judge ourselves by our intentions.

“I didn’t mean it like that...”

“They should’ve known my heart...”

But when someone else does the same thing?

We assume the worst.

Illustration:

The Bible is not a window to look at others...

It is a mirror to examine yourself.

And the more you look into the mirror of God's Word, the more you realize:

"I'm not qualified to judge anybody."

We often think our issue is our mouth...

But Jesus said:

**"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."**

So the real issue is not:

"I talk too much..."

The issue is:

**"My heart is not aligned with the love of God."**

POINT 2: **When we judge others, we put ourselves above God**

James says something shocking:

"When you judge... you judge the law."

That means:

You are not just judging people...

You are acting like you are above God's Word.

Key Truth:

**Judging others is an attempt to replace God.**

James says:

“You judge the law... you are not a doer... but a judge.”

This is staggering.

When you judge others, you are saying:

“God, your standard is not enough...  
I will take over from here.”

There is only:

- one Lawgiver
- one Judge
- one who saves and destroys

And it's not you.

Illustration (Firefighters & Gasoline)

Imagine a house on fire.

You expect firefighters to bring water...

But instead, they bring gasoline and throw it on the fire.

That's what criticism does.

It doesn't solve conflict...

It multiplies it.

- Criticism fuels division
- Slander spreads damage
- Judgment burns relationships

But grace?

Grace puts the fire out.

POINT 3: **Judgment flows from pride, but humility kills it**

Why do we judge?

Let's be honest:

- It makes us feel superior
- It makes us feel in control
- It makes us feel better about ourselves

But here's the problem:

**You rarely judge people doing more than you...  
You judge people doing less than you.**

That's pride.

Paul's Example

Paul started his ministry saying:

- "I am the least of the apostles"

Later he said:

- "I am the least of all saints"

At the end of his life:

- "I am the chief of sinners"

What happened?

He got a greater revelation of Jesus.

And the higher Jesus became...

The lower Paul saw himself.

Key Truth:

**When you see God clearly, you stop judging others quickly.**

POINT 4: **The measure you use will be used on you**

Jesus said:

**“Judge not... for with the judgment you use, you will be judged.”**

Let that settle in.

The way you:

- talk about others
- criticize others
- tear down others

Becomes the standard applied to you.

Do you really want God to judge you the same way you judge others?

Because I don't.

I want:

- grace
- mercy
- patience
- compassion

But we often give others:

- criticism
- suspicion
- harshness
- condemnation

Criticism is not just gasoline on a fire...

It is spiritual arson.

- It damages trust
- It fractures relationships
- It poisons environments
- It multiplies offense

And James is saying:

“You are not helping, you are harming.”

POINT 5: **We are called to be peacemakers, not critics**

Jesus said:

**“Blessed are the peacemakers...”**

Not:

- Blessed are the commentators
- Blessed are the critics
- Blessed are the fault-finders

Everywhere you go:

- home
- work
- church
- social media

You carry one of two things:

Gasoline or water

- Criticism = gasoline
- Grace = water

POINT 6: **Judgment keeps you from being used by God**



So, what's the solution?

Not behavior modification...

Revelation of the Gospel.

At the cross:

- You were fully seen
- Fully known
- Fully guilty

And still...

Fully loved.

When you realize:

- How much you've been forgiven
- How much grace you've received

You lose the appetite to judge others.

**People who live aware of grace become distributors of grace.**

Let me ask you plainly:

Do you want to be used by God?

Do you want a soft heart?

Do you want the Holy Spirit to flow through you?

Then:

Stop fueling conflict with criticism.  
Stop pretending you are the judge.

Because of a judgmental spirit:

- hardens your heart

- grieves the Spirit
- damages relationships
- blocks spiritual growth

Let's get real for a moment.

Most of us are guilty.

We've:

- judged people
- criticized people
- spoken about people
- assumed things about people

So, what do we do?

We don't justify it...

We repent.

“Lord, forgive me for stepping into a role that belongs only to You.  
Forgive me for criticizing what You created.  
Forgive me for speaking against people made in Your image.  
Give me a heart of humility...  
Give me a mouth of grace...  
Help me walk as a peacemaker.”

And let me say this:

This kind of life—this kind of humility—is impossible without Jesus.

You cannot live free from pride without the Holy Spirit living inside you.

So, if you've never surrendered your life to Christ...

Today is your moment.

Conclusion

Let me bring it all together:

There is only one Judge.

And when you step off the bench...

You step into peace.

The moment you stop judging others is the moment God starts transforming you.