

## James 4:11-12

Reference James 3:1-12 as it defines the difficulty of taming the tongue. The tongue here is an example of not being tamed and very dangerous and destructive. Chapter four of James can be entitled "Things To Avoid." The entire epistle is based upon "tests of living faith."

**Vs. 11A** - The word "speak" is a Greek word meaning "to speak against one, criminate." Who is James talking to? The brethren, which is speaking of a brother. Thus, he is speaking to those in the church! The word can also be translated "slander." It is the opposite of being humble in vs. 10. In 1828 edition of Noah Webster's dictionary he defines slander as "a false tale to report maliciously uttered, and tending to injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens, by exposing him to impeachment and punishment, or by impairing his means of living." Proverbs 22:1 "**A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.**" Slander destroys a good name.

Slander does not need a particular set of circumstances to be accomplished. It only needs a malicious tongue driven by hatred. The Psalmist says, "**All who hate me whisper together against me**" (Psalms 41:7a). Leviticus 19:16a warns, "**You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people.**" In a description of a godly man, the Psalmist says, "**He does not slander with his tongue...**" (Psalms 15:3). The slander stirs up contention, Proverbs 26:20 "**For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.**"

### Examples of slander:

- Saul's servant Ziba, slandered Jonathan's son Mephibosheth to David, falsely accusing him of plotting to usurp the throne (2 Samuel 16:3).
- At the instigation of the wicked queen Jezebel, two worthless men slandered righteous Naboth, bringing about his execution "**Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones.**" 1 Kings 21:13
- Haman, slandered the Jews to the Persian King
- Read 2 Samuel 10 and the results of slander
- Slander originated in the garden when Satan slandered God's motives by saying, "**Has indeed God said?**" Another common title of Satan is devil, which fittingly means "slanderer". Revelation 12:10 "**Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.**" The devil slandered God's character and truth by adding words and deceiving her.
- Slander is a very serious sin, cf Proverbs 6:6-19; Psalms 52:1-5

What this text is not speaking about is the need to rebuke and expose unrepentant sin. We are commanded in Scripture to go to brothers who are openly sinning against the Word of God, cf. Matthew 18:15-17.

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False teachers are to be exposed, on the premise of God's word, not man's opinion. As a shepherd, if I see a false teacher spreading a false gospel, and the flock is listening or being influenced by crafty words, I must warn and speak. Titus 3:10 (NKJV), "**Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition.**" Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, thus James's words do not forbid the exposing of false teaching. Exposing sin with righteous intent is not the same as lying with malicious intent, which is what slander is.

On the other hand, sanctified speech marks a true believer. Ephesians 4:25,29 "**Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another... Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.**" Colossians 4:6 "**Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.**"

In an effort to help believers control their tongues and avoid slander, James exhorts use to examine four areas of our thinking: what we think of others, the law, God, and ourselves.