

The Book Of James: Lesson 9

## One Lawgiver & Judge

**Memory Text:** “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” James 4:12

**Illustration/Setting The Stage:** Arrogance stunts a person’s potential. Leo Tolstoy said, “An arrogant person considers himself to be perfect. This is the chief harm of the arrogance. It interferes with a person’s main task in life – becoming a better person.” We’ve all had those moments when we’ve looked confidently at someone and said, “Watch this,” as if to say, “I’m good,” or “I can do a better job than the other person” (sometimes resulting in us falling flat on our faces). Spiritual arrogance is the greatest hindrance to advancement in character development and Christ-likeness.

What is arrogance? The dictionary defines it as “having or revealing an exaggerated sense of one’s own importance or abilities. Synonyms include conceited, self-important, egotistical, overweening, or to big for one’s boots.

This was evidently the problem with some Christian’s in the early church, thus leading James to address it in his letter to the church of his day. It was a spiritual pride that led some believers to show off their “good works” and to putting others down. And this created strife and division among the believers.

### Sunday – Judgment Or Discernment

James 4:11; Matthew 7:1-5; John 7:24

**Read James 4:11.** James has come full-circle. A lack of humility before God inevitably leads to a similar lack for men. “Stop speaking evil,” or “stop backbiting” (slander, libel, defamation, etc.).

Someone once asked the person who gave him verbal abuse whether after handing a person a gift, and the individual declined the gift, to whom would the gift belong? He responded, “To him who offered it.” The abused replied, “Well, I decline to accept your abuse, and request you keep it to yourself.”

Harsh criticism of a person reveals self-interest and creates dissension in the church (“See how great a forest a little fire kindles” – Jas 3:5 – think El Dorado National Forest where 71,000 acres burned in short order). James called this wisdom – earthly, sensual, and devilish. Devilish, because in Lucifer’s attempt to promote himself he slandered God’s good name. He is the father of defamation and lies.

“Judges his brother” – This judging is associated with critical faultfinding whose purpose is to injure. Jesus talked to this as well (see Matt. 7:1-3 – “Judge not that you be not judged.”) We have no right to judge another person’s character or motives. Plus we don’t do a very good job.

Bishop Potter was sailing for Europe on one of the great transatlantic ocean liners. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see the accommodations, he came up to the purser's desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the other berth. Judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person. The purser accepted the responsibility for the valuables and remarked, “It's all right, bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has been up here and left his for the same reason!”

“Judges the law” – the law doesn’t apply in his case. In essence he’s saying that there’s no law to protect the accused brother and that no law condemns his spirit and actions. We could say that he thinks he’s above the law. This spirit pervades modern society – police, government officials, celebrities, etc. God is looking for law keepers in His church, not lawmakers.

*“Christ is the true standard of character, and he who sets himself up as a standard for others is putting himself in the place of Christ. And since the Father “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22), whoever presumes to judge the motives of others is again usurping the prerogatives of the Son of God. These would-be judges and critics are placing themselves on the side of antichrist...”* (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 125, 126)

The judging that is condemned deals with motive and character not discernment between right and wrong:

**Acts 17:11:** “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.” – knowing the truth.

**2 Corinthians 13:5:** “Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you are disqualified.” – assessing our own spiritual growth.

**Galatians 6:1:** “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” – helping others.

**John 7:24:** “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” – by their fruits you will know them.

## Monday – The Lawgiver Is Judge

James 4:12; Isaiah 33:22; John 5:22, 26, 27

**Read James 4:12.** In other words, who do we think we are to judge someone when God is judge of all? That's His prerogative not ours. Whereas we can be unkind and mean in our assessment of others, God's judgment is based on perfect justice, righteousness, and fairness.

**Isaiah 33:22:** “(For the LORD *is* our Judge, the LORD *is* our Lawgiver, the LORD *is* our King; He will save us).” – King, Lawgiver, Judge, and *Savior*. These three titles given to God, that normally strike fear into the heart of humanity, are actually used by Isaiah to reveal God's desire to save us. However destruction comes to those who choose it. “God only destroys things that have no future.” – Jiri Moskala

As Lawgiver He is the best qualified to explain the meaning of the law and judge whether or not His law (the standard in the judgment – Jas 2:12) has been broken.

**Isaiah 11: 3, 4:** “His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.” – He will do what is right and fair.

**John 5:22, 26, 27:** “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son...For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” – Why not say “Son of God”? Why say instead “Son of Man”? One who understands us and knows what it means to be tempted is the One who will judge us. He is our defense attorney as well (1 John 2:1). He is for us, not against us. Ultimately He wants to vindicate us.

**Question:** John 5:24 says that the believer won't come into judgment. If that is the case, why do I need to stand before God in the judgment? What's the point of the investigative judgment? – “Judgment”, rather “condemnation”. All will stand before God in judgment (Rom. 14:11) and it begins with the church (1 Pet. 4:17). In essence, its purpose is to reveal who truly believes on Jesus, as opposed to those who merely say they believe.

## Tuesday – Planning Ahead

James 4:13-15; Proverbs 27:1; Luke 17:26-30

**Proverbs 27:1:** “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” The wise man isn't advising us to be careless regarding the future (neither does Jesus teaching regarding anxious thought) as it was the same man who advised us to go to the ant and learn from it. Instead it's a warning against self-trust and self-assurance.

**Read James 4:13, 14a.** The double-minded man (Jas 1:8) does not have heavenly wisdom, neglects to treat other with courtesy, lacks purity of heart before God, and neglects God in his everyday affairs. This is arrogance at its best. This attitude is seen in...

Haman (Esther 5:12): “Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.” By chapter seven, he was dead.

The rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.”

Many in the last days (**Luke 17:26-30**). What’s the concern here? It’s not financial prosperity as long as its held secondary to doing God’s will. It’s not in what people can do. It’s boasting about tomorrow. It’s about their attitude about what they do. It’s about being sure they’ll be around to fulfill their plans without giving consideration to what God’s plans are for them. But we don’t know what tomorrow will bring, however God does, and He can do with our lives better than we can for ourselves.

### Wednesday – A Mist

James 4:14; Psalm 90:12

**Read James 4:14.** What is the crucial point being made here? Life is fleeting. Life is uncertain. Solomon also likened life to vapor, although he used a word we’re more familiar with – vanity – which expresses the transitory nature of life.

**Job 8:9:** “For we *were born* yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth *are* a shadow.” Human begins to disappear almost as soon as it appears.

**Psalm 102:11:** “My days *are* like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass.” Like mist life can dissipate suddenly.

**Psalm 90:12:** “So teach *us* to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” We need to spend time contemplating the shortness of life so we can learn how to best use the time we’re given. Average life span of a person is 28,000 days. This is what was put in your “time bank” when you were born. To find out how many days you have left take your age and multiply it by 365, then subtract it from 28,000. If you’re 25 (9,125 days), then you have 18,875. If you’re 50 (18,250 days), then you have 9,750 days remaining. Don’t forget to factor in that you’re awake only two-thirds of your life.

## Thursday – Knowing & Doing What Is Good

James 4:16, 17;

**Read James 4:16, 17.** Far from realizing their serious condition, these bragging churchgoers continue to confidently make their plans without consulting God, when instead they ought to have humbled themselves before Him. They believe the future is in their hands and any success they realize is a result of their own smarts.

“Evil” – That’s because it exalts self-sufficiency and fosters presumption which is akin to the spirit and thinking of Lucifer. It’s selfish, while true “love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own.” (1 Cor. 13:4, 5) Plan, yes. Go it along, never (Ps. 16:9 – “A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”)

“Does not do it” – is a “hearer” of the word and not a doer (1:23, 26). “A perverted faith trusts in knowledge only and proves its falsity when it avoids deeds that sincere faith would gladly do.” It’s also a reprimand to those who refuse to continue to study the Bible because of fear they will learn of other duties they don’t wish to perform.

“Sin” – The Bible defines sin two ways: 1. Doing wrong (1 John 3:4 – specific infractions made against God’s law); 2. Not doing right (4:17). The gospel doesn’t call for abstaining from evil only, but calls for Christians to be doers of good (sins of commission & omission). A person could hide themselves in a cave in the hopes they would avoid temptation and live a victorious life over sin, but while they might be good, they’re life is in fact good for nothing (Matt. 5:13-16 – salt & light of the world). Jesus commends the “sheep” for having lived their faith in giving assistance to those needed it.

Our lives however can’t be a continual round of busyness, but we can be intentional about how and when we help, doing all we can on a given day.

**Appeal:** Arrogance is the biggest hindrance to our development as Christian’s. Let us live and walk humbly before the Lord, serving and loving others.