

GOSSIPING SIGNALS THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE EQUAL WITH GOD.

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

Grasping the Gossip Game:

- God is **serious** about gossip – 4:11

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.

Q: What does it mean to 'speak evil'?

A: 'Speak evil' is a compound word meaning, "to speak ill of, speak degradingly of, speak evil of, defame, slander." It's broader than just speaking falsehood; it's saying anything with the intent to tear down.

The Law on Speech:

James 2:8

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

Leviticus 19:15-18

You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. ¹⁶ You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ¹⁷ You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ 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.

Proverbs 31:26

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

- Gossip (as does all self-advancement) comes from an **exaggerated** sense of self-importance – 4:1-10

- Judging advances a higher **standard** (what we feel about someone) above God's Law and a greater **judge** (us) above God attempting to act as God – 4:11b
But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

Misconceptions about judging:

- 1) "Jesus said, "Thou shalt not judge," right? Wrong. Jesus never said that. Jesus did say, "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:1-2
- 2) "Saying someone is wrong = judging." False. Taking a stand based on God's standards and saying the same thing that God says about sin is not judging; it's being truthful and consistent. Taking a stand for God with the intent to be faithful to Him is an overwhelmingly loving action. Our culture flippantly spouts, "Only God can judge me!" Don't worry...He will...so run to Jesus for mercy. He's a mighty Savior.
- 3) "Evaluating a person's life or words = judging." We can examine a person's actions but we can't judge the motives.

- We are not the ultimate authority – 4:12

There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Psalm 76:6-7

For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, ⁷ but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Q: Why is gossip such a big deal?

- 1) Gossiping reveals more about the **gossiper** than it does the one being gossiped about: those who gossip to you will gossip about you.
- 2) We're **family**, not **enemies**.
- 3) Unbelievers are already looking to undermine the people of God. Why assist them? We act as **functional** agents of Satan when we gossip.
- 4) Gossip stifles momentum.

How do we respond?

- Repent of gossiping.
- Practice the discipline of encouragement.
- Remember Jesus who was terribly slandered but remained faithful.