

Counsel on the Words we use

“The verb “speak against” (*katalalevw*) can sound overtones of unjustified speech against someone (hence NIV “slander”), and it can parallel the more negative meanings of “judge” (*krivnw*--such as “condemn;” cf. NJB). But it may also refer to broader oral mistreatment, including “destructive verbal attacks, gossip behind another person’s back and false accusations.” (from Blomberg’s unpublished commentary on James)

Satan is called the accuser of believers. When we pass along hurtful, demeaning information, we are doing the devil’s work. (Blanchard, 304)

James has repeatedly touched on this subject of our sinful propensity to destroy each other in our pursuit of self:

- James 1:14-15 “but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.
- James 1:19-20 “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
- James 3:6-9 “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body...no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.
- James 3:16 “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.
- James 4:1 “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?
- James 4:12 “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”

“Defamation begins and lives on in the mind. It is something we say to ourselves long before we pass it on. But if our minds were drilled in biblical attitudes, then love for our brothers would begin to root out censoriousness.

Consideration for our neighbors would begin to replace the hurtful and arrogant word by helpful and caring pastoral concern.” Alec Motyer, James, 158)

“Judgmental words eventually will flow out of a judgmental heart, but the sin begins in the heart. It is a manifestation of pride; we think that we’re better than others are.

(1) You judge someone wrongly when you criticize him out of jealousy, bitterness, selfish ambition, or some other sin, rather than seeking to build him in Christ.

(2) You judge someone wrongly when you assume that you know all of the pertinent facts and motives behind the person’s words or actions.

(3) You judge someone wrongly when you set up human standards, rather than holding to God’s word as the standard.

(4) You judge someone wrongly when you do not first judge your own sin before trying to help him with his sin.

(5) You judge someone wrongly when you share confidential or personal information with the wrong intent.

(6) You judge someone wrongly when out of a selfrighteous spirit, you criticize or malign him over a minor or indifferent matter.

(7) You judge someone wrongly when you make an authoritative pronouncement about his eternal destiny.

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http://www.fcfonline.org/search_methods.asp?search=1&search_method=advanced&sermon_book=James

Stulac suggests three ways in which Christians are often too quick to criticize: “judging the motives behind others’ words or actions in church business, judging how others spend money and judging how others are rearing their children.” (George Stulac, James, 155)