

decide mentally or judicially; it implies to try, condemn, punish. **How is this different from other kinds of judgment that we are called to do, such as what is described in John 7: 24?** This form of judging is fault-finding. It is not based on having all the facts to make a just assessment. It is not talking about discernment. Matthew Henry in his *Commentary* (page 997) also states that besides not taking “pleasure in making known the faults of others,” we should not be “making more of their faults than they really deserve,” nor should we be “making false stories.”

4. **What does verse 12 say to a person who criticizes or accuses another Christian?** There is only one Law-giver and Judge – God. **What does the question at the end of this verse imply?** Who do you think you are? Who made you God? Contrast this question with the question beginning James 3:13. The question here is a rebuke, whereas in 3:13 it is a question indicating that those who describe themselves this way will act a certain way to be further described in the verses following 3:13. The word “Lawgiver” used here is a compound word meaning to set, place, constitute, or lay down law. “God not only authored the Law, He also administrates the Law . . . He upholds and enforces His Law.” “James’ Jewish readers knew this truth well; this reminder is a rebuke to their haughty attitudes and judgmental attitudes.” (John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, page 831).
5. **When you are ready to criticize or speak evil of someone, what should you remember?** We need to remember God’s law of love. **What can you say instead? (See Ephesians 4:29; 5:4 and Romans 14:19.)** We can say something good, kind, beneficial – something that leads to peace and builds the person up spiritually. Say something helpful to their need. Speak something that is thankful and grateful to God. **A question to think about: How careful am I when speaking to or about others?**

DAY 3 – James 4:13-14

1. **What presumptions or attitudes are reflected in a person who makes the statement described in verse 13?** That we are in control of today and tomorrow, leaving God out of our plans. We demonstrate the attitudes of pride, self-confidence with no thought of God; our main concern is accumulation of wealth and boasting about what we will do.
These Jewish traders were making their plans “like all is completely within their power, the journey to the city will be safe, the year free of sickness or disaster, and the profit a sure thing.” (C. R. Erdman, *The General Epistles*, page 50)
2. **Read Genesis 39:2-3, 7-9. Contrast Joseph’s attitude with the attitude expressed in verse 13.** Joseph is described as “the Lord was with Joseph” and “his master saw that the Lord was with him.” Joseph’s life was above reproach and demonstrated his faithfulness to God. He did not leave God out of his job – whether he was running a household and business for a human master, managing prisoners within a prison or running the country for Pharaoh. The message here is “Do not leave God out of your life’s work, make Jesus Christ the center of your vocation.” (George Sweeting, *How to Solve Conflicts*, page 118)
3. **The people specifically being addressed by James were Christian Jewish business merchants who traveled throughout the world and carried on a lucrative trade. How were these Christians acting no differently from the rest of the world?** They were carrying on their business with their own plans and no thought about God – self-assertive, self-confident and self-centered. **What are some contemporary examples of this?** People often plan their agenda, business dealings, even personal calendars as if tomorrow is a sure thing. Often it is forbidden to talk about God, or pray to God in the work place.
4. **According to verse 14, what are these business people forgetting?** They are forgetting that they do not know the future. **What is this verse saying about the nature of human life?** The nature of human life is temporary. **What is the main point of James’ answer?** Tomorrow is uncertain. Only God knows the future. The NLT footnote says “Life is short no matter how long we live. . . Live for God today! Then, no matter when your life ends, you will have fulfilled God’s plan for you.”

DAY 4 – James 4:15-16

1. **In contrast to the attitude reflected in verse 13, what does verse 15 suggest about the attitude we should have when we consider the activities and responsibilities of our lives—both in professional and business lives and in our day to day activities beyond our jobs or professions?** Instead of the attitude in verse 13, we should acknowledge that our plans are subject to God’s will. We should recognize His sovereignty in our lives and be humble and not prideful. **How does Proverbs 3:5-6 contribute to our understanding of James 4:15?** It shows that we should acknowledge God as sovereign in our lives by trusting in His leading and direction in every area of our lives. These verses point out that we have limited understanding. It involves committing our whole being to the Lord. The word “ought” signifies duty. “These businessmen were literally taking their lives into their own hands. They were assuming that they were in full control of their own destinies ... seemingly they had no idea God might have other plans for them.” (George Sweeting, *How to Solve Conflicts*, page 121).
2. **Is James saying that we should say this phrase about God’s will constantly? If not, what is he saying?** It is not that we should constantly repeat this phrase as a cliché or charm. At times, a thoughtful use of the phrase is honoring to God. It does mean that in our lives we recognize and believe that all its blessings are gifts from God and that the future is wholly in His hands. “The uncertainty of the future ought not to be a terror to the Christian; instead it ought to force on him or her an awareness of how dependent a person is upon God, and thus move that person to a planning that involves God.” (Lyman Coleman and Richard Peace, *James*, page 50)
3. **In verse 16, James returns to the attitude reflected in verse 13. How does he describe it here? He describes it as boasting and bragging. It is the nature of people to boast about our successes and brag about our plans and projects. What does he say it is? He says it is evil. If James is not condemning international business trading or planning our business dealings in these verses, what is he saying?** James is not condemning international business trading or planning our business dealings. What he is saying is that we not do these things without reference to God. The boasting was claiming to have the future under our control when only God holds time in His hands. The word brag “originally described an itinerant quack who touted “cures” that did not work. It came to mean claiming to be able to do something that you could not do.” (Lyman Coleman and Richard Peace, *James*, page 51)

To Dig Deeper: What is God’s will and how are we to do God’s will?

“In the broadest sense, God’s will is expressed in all the commands and principles of Scripture” (John MacArthur, *James*, page 78). This includes that people be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), that we be Spirit-filled (Ephesians 5:17-18) and that we love the Lord with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37). How are we to do God’s will? See Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 1:9-10 and Hebrews 13:20-21. We are to do the will of God from our hearts, through spiritual wisdom and understanding, by living a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way and ably bearing fruit in every good work. And we do this equipped by God. How does a concern for the will of God demonstrate our belief in His sovereignty? (See Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 12:9-10; Psalm 104:29 and Hebrews 9:27.) It demonstrates that we believe there is no other God and that He alone gives life and breath to every creature. He has the power over life and death, wellness and woundedness. It is a realization that in the end everyone will face God and answer to Him. As we learned in James 4:7 – a true Christian submits his plans to the lordship of Christ.

DAY 5 – James 4:17

1. **We tend to think of sin as doing wrong. What is James telling us is also sin?** Sin is also not doing what we know is right. This is often referred to as sins of omission. Matthew Henry states in his commentary (p. 993) that this is actually sinning with a witness – our own conscience stands to accuse us.
2. **How does this verse relate to verses 13-16?** Verse 17 relates to verses 13-16 in that we know it is right when we make our plans to recognize that God is in control of our lives and plans and to invite and include Him into our plans. Therefore, to not do so is to sin.

3. **What connection does this verse have to what James has taught in James 4:1-10?** The connection of verse 17 to James 4:1-10 is that we know it is right to humble ourselves and submit ourselves to God. This involves accepting that we cannot do it all ourselves; we can't even pray from right motives, let alone get along with other people. It requires that we submit ourselves – with all our selfish and self-centered attitude – to God's power and control—and repent of our self-controlled ways to His ways.

To Dig Deeper: How does James 4:17 relate to what James has taught so far in chapters 1-4?

It is very likely that verse 17 relates to all the advice given in James chapters 1-4. In James 1:2-8 we saw that Christian maturity results from the trials in our life. We learned that it is right to face these trials with joy and prayer. Then in James 1:11-27 we saw that it is not right to blame God when we face temptations, and that we are not only to listen to God's Word but also to do it, which includes taking care of orphans and widows. Next, we saw in James 2:1-13 that we are not to show favoritism to anyone – rich or poor – and not make assumptions based on appearances. We are to keep the law of Christ – “to love our neighbor as ourselves.” We are again reminded in James 2:14-26 to live out our faith in Christ, to show our faith by what we do. James 3:1-12 makes it clear that what we say and how we say it – the use of our tongue – should be carefully controlled. And finally, in James 3:13-18 we are to reflect God's wisdom in humility by living a good life and doing good deeds, striving to be a peace-maker. These are all things God, through James, tells us are right to do. Therefore, if we do not do even one of the good things we ought to do, we are sinning. We get so busy living life that we often don't even realize we are not doing some of the things that we know are right to do. At other times we are very aware that we are not doing something right. Take some time to meditate on these passages and as God impresses an area that you need to attend to, spend time in prayer with Him – submit to Him and ask for His wisdom to do what is right.

DAY 6

1. **Identify a verse or two in this passage that is particularly meaningful to you, write it down, and memorize it. (perhaps verse 17 or 11)**
2. **Write down two or three things that this passage teaches us about what it means to be a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ.**
3. **Think about a song or hymn that relates to the ideas in this passage.** Perhaps these words from “All For Jesus”

*All for Jesus, all for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed pow'rs”
All my tho'ts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours:
All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
All my days and all my hours.*

*Let my hands perform His bidding,
Let my feet run in His ways;
Let my eyes see Jesus only,
Let my lips speak forth His praise:*

Or these words from “I Am Resolved”

*I am resolved to follow the Savior,
Faithful and true each day;
Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth –
He is the living way.*