**Do not Slander One Another**

**The Word**

Read together James 4:11-12

**The Big Idea**

James calls us to a deep humility that recognizes God alone is the judge and that practices gracious speech with other human beings who are made in his image.

**Questions for Reflection**

1. Today’s message made a distinction between unhealthy judgmental speech and healthy correction or healthy challenging of ideas. How can we tell when we’ve moved past one of those healthy postures into an unhealthy posture?

2. Discuss the comment made in the message: “slander is not primarily a failure of love but a failure of humility.”

3. As you consider your speech towards all fellow human beings, where specifically does this passage convict you?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

A. This summer we are exploring the “one anothers” in Scripture as a way of considering what the church is. Today’s one another is found in v. 11: “Do not slander one another.”

B. What is slander?

 1. The word means “to speak down” or “speak against”

2. Slander comes from a place of implicit superiority (being “above” someone else), and its primary intent is to insult, vilify, condemn, or dismiss

3. We must distinguish judgmental and slanderous speech from other things that are actually totally appropriate: loving correction or appropriately challenging other people’s ideas.

C. James’ implicit question is this: “who are they?” (= who is the person you are judging?)

 1. They are your “brother” or “sister” (v. 11)

 a. This would apply to anyone within the family of faith

b. James is reminding us that the person we are slandering is a person God sent his son for, Jesus died for, has been given God’s forgiveness, adopted into his family, destined for eternal glory. We don’t want to slander one of God’s own children who is a brother or sister.

 2. They are your “neighbor” (v. 12)

 a. Jesus applies the word “neighbor” to every human being

b. Every human being is made in the image of God and is worthy of dignity and respect.

c. We don’t want to slander someone who is made in God’s own image

d. James 3:9: “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who are made in God’s image.”

D. James’ explicit question is this: “who are you?” (= who do you think you are?)

 1. Recognize your place in relation to God’s law (v. 11)

a. When you judge another person you 1) disobey the law (which commands you to love your neighbor as yourself) and 2) you implicitly judge the law, claiming that the law should in fact command judgment and criticism, not love.

b. You do not want to put yourself above the law

 2. Recognize your place in relation to God (v. 12)

a. When you judge another person, you put yourself in the place of God and implicitly say that there should be two judges/lawgivers in the universe: God AND you

 b. But there is only ONE judge who is able to save and destroy

 c. You are a mere mortal who has no right to judge another

E. This passage is a call to humility

1. Judgment and slander is not first and foremost a failure of love; it’s a failure of humility.

2. We must remind ourselves of the gospel daily (= sinners saved by grace) so that we can offer that humbly to others.