

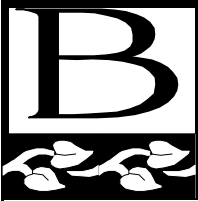
# HOW TO BE YOUR OWN SELFISH PIG

James 4:11-5:6

*"The most pleasurable journey you take is through yourself; the only sustaining love is with yourself."*  
Shirley MacLaine

When we try to go our own way in this world, a number of things invariably begin to happen. James deals with each of these, in relation to others, to our own lives, and to material things.

## What Does It Say?



*Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. <sup>12</sup> 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?*

## What Does It Mean?

Outline this passage by giving titles to each section:

4:11-12

4:13-17

5:1-6

Read the following quote by Walter Wangerin, in which he describes how a certain spider kills its prey. Although it is rather graphic, it illustrates how we can harm one another with words:

*"Through tiny punctures she injects her digestive juices into a fly so that his insides are broken down and turned into a warm soup. This soup she swills even as most of us devour the souls of one another after having cooked them in various enzymes: guilt, humiliation, cruel love - there are a number of fine, acidic mixes. And some among us are so skilled with the hypodermic word that our dear ones continue to sit up and smile, quite as though they were still alive."*  
(Walter Wangerin)

"Katalalia ("**slander**") is the sin of those who meet in corners and gather in little groups and pass on confidential tidbits of information which destroy the good name of those who are not there to defend themselves. There are few sins which the Bible so unsparingly condemns, and few activities in which the average person finds more delight."

William Barclay

To "**speak against**" = "to defame, denigrate, to talk down of someone, to lower the listener's estimate of another person."

Have you ever been the victim of slander? How did it feel, and was it ever resolved?

<sup>13</sup> Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

<sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

<sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

<sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

<sup>17</sup> Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Read **1 Corinthians 4:5** and comment on its relevance to this passage.

What is the balance between caring, concerned involvement (see **James 5:19,20** and **Galatians 6:1,2**) and judgmentalism?

### Verses 13-17

*"How foolish it is for a man to make plans for his life, when not even tomorrow is in his control."*

Roman Philosopher Seneca

*"A principle of guidance: Never allow plans to be so "scheduled" that you find it difficult to respond to the Spirit working. Let your walk be flexible." (Jim Elliot, missionary, writing in his journal Sept. 6, 1950, six years before death at the hands of Auca Indians)*

**Read** the following passages in relation to verses 13-17. Do they represent a view of life any different than that of our culture?

**Ecclesiastes 2:11**

**Psalm 39:4-6**

**Psalm 90** (Moses probably wrote this at the end of his life)

**Luke 12:16-21**

*I spoke to her at the bus stop  
But she turned the other way  
My immediate reaction –  
A rush of resentment  
She's ignoring me  
She really doesn't like me  
I've always suspected it  
Now I know.  
Suddenly she looked toward me  
Startled, but sincere:  
"Forgive me – I didn't see you."  
(Until then I hadn't noticed the  
agony lining her face.)  
A hesitant pause, A catch in her voice –  
"I just came from the doctor's office,  
Our little boy has leukemia.  
It's all a terrible nightmare."*

*Lord, Lord  
What loathsome selfishness.  
A mother stricken with grief  
Her heart soaked with pain  
An hour of black catastrophe  
And I thought only of me  
Cleanse me, Lord  
Sensitize me  
Until my first concern is for others  
And my last concern is for me.*

Ruth Calkins

*5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you.*

*2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.*

*3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.*

*4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.*

*5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.*

*6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.*

Do you think James is addressing believers or unbelievers in this section (5:1-6)?

**Contrast** the lifestyle portrayed here with the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-10

“Lord Almighty” is literally “Lord of Sabaoth” which means “Lord of Hosts” – why does James use this name for God here?

“lived luxuriously” means soft, extravagant comfort

“wanton pleasure” means having no moral restraints, going beyond pleasure to evil.

“Together these phrases picture a life without self-denial which offers no resistance to any sin which promises comfort and enjoyment.”

## CONCLUSION

**Summarize** the teaching of this whole passage (4:11 - 5:6) by contrasting the traits of a wise and foolish person:

Foolishness	Wisdom

*“Grace fills us with very different feelings from the possession of anything else. A man who has much money is not very anxious that all the world should be rich; one who has much learning does not long that all the world were learned; but if you have tasted the grace of the Gospel, the irresistible longing of your hearts will be, ‘O that all the world might taste its regenerating waters.’ ”*

Robert Murray McCheyne, Sept 16, 1840

*“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”*

Jim Elliot