Words That Build Up: Love Instead of Slander

Pastor Rick and First Lady Deanne Mulkins on James 4:11–12, Humility, God’s Love, and the Power of Our Words

Pastor Rick Mulkins Sr. and First Lady Deanne Mulkins | Friday, October 30, 2026 | Host: Mark Burns

Program Summary

In this Friday room-of-friends edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Rick Mulkins Sr. and First Lady Deanne fill in for Pastor Mark Johnson to continue the study of James 4, beginning with verses 11–12. The group discusses the danger of slander, gossip, careless accusations, and judgmental speech, including the harm caused when social media rumors spread before anyone checks the facts. Pastor Rick and Deanne contrast fault-finding with Christ's command to love one another and encourage listeners to build people up rather than tear them down. The discussion broadens into God's love for those who have experienced difficult family relationships, the difference between righteous discernment and condemnation, and the humility of remembering that God alone is the ultimate Judge. Near the close, Rick shares how reading Scripture transformed him from a skeptic into a believer, and Mark invites listeners to open the Bible, seek God, and discover the grace offered through Jesus.

Key Takeaways

• James 4:11–12 warns believers against slander and assuming God's place as Judge.

• Gossip can begin subtly through insinuation, tone, facial expressions, or unverified stories.

• A reputation is precious; careless words can damage what takes years to build.

• Social media makes it easy to spread claims before learning the whole story.

• Christ commands believers to love one another as He has loved them.

• Righteous discernment should not be confused with self-righteous condemnation.

• God's love is not defined by the failures of earthly parents or other people.

• Humility remembers that everyone needs God's grace.

• The gospel offers forgiveness through Jesus, not a reward earned by good works.

• Reading Scripture and seeking God can become the beginning of a personal relationship with Him.

• The church is a body in which each believer has gifts to share.

Scripture References

• James 4:11–12

• James 1:26

• James 3:9–10

• James 4:8

• John 13:34–35

• John 7:24

• John 3:16

• 1 Corinthians 13:4–8

• Ephesians 4:29

• Ephesians 2:8–9

• Ecclesiastes 7:1

• John 1:1–14

Quote of the Day

“Our words can build a home, or they can break a heart.” — Pastor Rick Mulkins

Broadcast Notes

Christy reads James 4:11–12. Mark explains that Pastor Rick and First Lady Deanne Mulkins are facilitating in Pastor Mark Johnson's absence, with the room-of-friends gathering moved back to the original studio because of technical difficulties downstairs. The group considers false accusations, gossip, subtle insinuations, fault-finding, and social media sharing. They connect James' warning to John 13, Ephesians 4:29, Ecclesiastes 7:1, and the command to love. Mark asks Rick to explain the Father's love to listeners whose earthly fathers were absent or harmful. The conversation includes the hope of salvation, the authority of Scripture, and Rick's testimony of coming to faith through sustained Bible reading. Other participants share their experiences with Scripture. Mark closes by encouraging listeners to read the Bible, pray, and participate in a loving Bible-believing church. The original transcript contains a few apparent speech-to-text errors; recognizable proper names have been corrected, while uncertain wording is retained rather than invented.

❤■ Practical Applications

• Before sharing a story about someone, ask whether I know it is true and whether repeating it is loving.

• Pause before forwarding a social media post that could harm someone's reputation.

• Replace one negative remark with sincere encouragement.

• When correcting someone, distinguish truthful discernment from condemnation.

• Pray for a person I have been tempted to criticize.

• Ask forgiveness if my words have damaged someone's reputation.

• Remember that God loves people whose views or backgrounds differ from mine.

• Read 1 Corinthians 13 and consider whether my speech reflects patience and kindness.

• Invite a friend who is curious about Jesus to read a Gospel with me.

• Look for one way to build up my church family this weekend.

Today's Challenge

For seven days, practice a 'words that build' challenge. Before speaking or posting about another person, ask: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it loving? Each day encourage at least one person specifically. If I have repeated an unfair claim, I will correct it where possible. Read James 4:11–12 and Ephesians 4:29, asking the Lord to make my words instruments of grace.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me and inviting me to know You through Jesus. Forgive me for the times I have spoken too quickly, believed an unverified story, or judged another person without understanding their circumstances. Put a guard over my mouth and give me a heart that seeks truth with compassion. Help me build people up rather than tear them down. Teach me to love those who are different from me and to remember that I, too, depend on Your mercy. Where I have caused hurt, give me courage to make things right. Draw me closer to You through Your Word, and let the way I speak reflect the love of Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speakers

Pastor Rick Mulkins Sr. serves at First Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois. He and his wife, First Lady Deanne Mulkins, are valued guests and facilitators of the Friday room-of-friends Bible discussions on Mark & Friends. Together they encourage biblical faith, loving relationships, prayer, and practical Christian living. In this program they guide a conversation on James 4:11–12 and the call to speak with love and humility.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With more than three decades in Christian radio and ministry, he welcomes pastors, teachers, authors, and everyday believers for Scripture-centered conversations that educate, edify, and evangelize.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're here.

It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear. Everyone loves you.

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Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're here. It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear.

Everyone loves you. We're glad you're here. Reading from James 4 verses 11 and 12.

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. But if thou judgeth the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another? That's James 4 verses 11 and 12. And that was Christy, a regular during Mark & Friends on Friday.

O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. It is Friday, October 30th, 2026. Wow, we're gonna be saying goodbye to October in no time and welcome November.

Then we're gonna be talking about Thanksgiving and Christmas, then the new year, 2027. Hey, it's all around us and it's coming pretty soon. But it's exciting times, especially if you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is a personal savior. He can be known, he can be followed. He loves you, he cares for you.

He died on the cross for your sins, for my sins. God made a way for all of us to have a relationship with him. And through Pastor Rick Mulkins, who's joining us with First Lady Deanne today.

They're filling in for Pastor Mark Johnson, who is returning from a vacation. But we're gonna continue our study through the book of James, looking at verses 11 and 12. That's what Christi read off with.

And I should tell you, I'll digress for a moment, a number of us have already prayed that God would use what Sudden shared, not only to his glory and to lift high the name of Jesus, but also to encourage you on your faith journey. If you're far from God and don't entertain the idea that he cares and loves you, I pray, I hope, we prayed that through this program today, you're

gonna recognize and experience his love. He cares for you.

You didn't just evolve or show up one day. God had you from all eternity in his mind. And you are listening today, maybe, to hear his message for you.

And you senior saints tuned in, I hope you're encouraged and you'll be praying up the program and praying up all those that share that God might be honored and people might be encouraged and blessed. And so I'm on a little bit of a roll today because our studio downstairs that we launched a couple months ago, we're having technical difficulties. So we're back in the old studio.

I think we have 12 different microphones set out with our group of friends, a couple new people here, Ed and Connie. They're from the Springfield area, right? They're joining us today. And so we have our regulars and friends, and we hope that you're blessed by what shared and said.

So Pastor Rick Mulkins from the First Baptist Church of Springfield will facilitate our discussion with the handy, capable, lovely First Lady, Deanne. We appreciate these two. Married for a number of years and could do programs on marriage and encouragement and the importance of God's word.

And so he's always my first go-to when Pastor Mark is out of town. But we're looking at James 4, 11 and 12 as read by Christy. Do you want to do a little summary about James, or where do you want to start, Pastor Mark? Well, first of all, I'd like to thank you for allowing Deanne and I to be here and all of you as well.

It's a very high honor and it's a privilege to sit on this side of the microphone. But we look at the book of James. I've mentioned to our church before that this little book, it's only five chapters in length, but it packs a punch.

And I think James is a half-brother of Jesus Christ. He's letting us know as Christians how we should live. And we look at that verse that Christy just read where it talks about do not slander one another.

That's very, very important because you know as well as I do, when we make judgments like that, when we're slamming one another, we're condemning them. And the Bible tells us not to condemn, but also God gives us a command. It's found in the book of John, chapter 13.

And that command is to love one another even as I have loved you. So we have to be careful because when we're slandering people, just for whatever reason it may be, that's not what God wants us to do. So by making sure that we're obedient to the Lord, we need to do exactly what he says to do.

And by slandering, Pastor Rick, I just wanted to say that that's accusing people falsely. That's false accusations. And we have seen throughout ministry that people see somebody doing something or hear something from somebody else, and then they start spreading that.

And it is nothing but poison when you do that. And we're not walking in love when we do that because of the fact that you don't know the whole story. None of us know, you know what I mean, sometimes the whole story.

No, we don't. And so for us to go and tell somebody else, well, I've seen such and such do this, you're only getting a partial of the story. You know what I'm saying? So I think about that because I know that in my own life, and I'm sure if you've been a Christian for a long time, there's been people that's accused you of something falsely.

And that's very hurtful. Yeah, and we have to be careful too because if we think about it, our words can build a home or they can break a heart. Now you think about that.

God wants us to encourage one another, especially in these last days, because we know the return of the Lord is imminent. We don't know exactly when. What we need to do is make sure that we are living the way the Lord would want us to live.

Obedience is very, very important. And I think with slander, I wrote down the word can be very subtle. It can be like, oh, did you hear just the tones that you use of the faith? Did you hear about Rick? Now, I don't know if it's true, but you know, and so we got to be really careful.

Even the facial expressions, the non-verbals can sometimes even communicate more with how we raise our eyebrows. You know how he tends to be that way. And we have to be careful too, because even hinting that can produce suspicion.

And so we have to be careful, especially us as leaders. You know, we want to make sure that we're doing everything God commands us to do. And you all know as well as I do, that we can only do that with the help of the Holy Spirit.

But that's what James is encouraging us to do what we need to do. And this verse 11, it begins with brothers. So these are church goers.

These are followers of Jesus. Exactly. And you know, Mark, I think about this at times.

Why do lies travel quicker than the truth? I've seen that. And people are so quick to, if you made a mistake, to let you know. Okay? And the other thing is, I told our church this past Sunday, I made some mistakes in the bulletin.

Okay? And so they were all like, no, that's not that. That's not this. And I said, hey, guys.

I said, yep, I made some mistakes there. But I said, you know what? Next time I do something good, would you let me know? Probably not. Probably not, Kevin.

So let truth go forward, you know? And not the lies, you know? And let compliments go forward, too, and not just, you did wrong. You did all that. Right, right.

Instead, let compliments come out. Yeah, I agree. It's terrible, really, because it seems like we as a people, we have a tendency to say the negative versus the positive.

And so we're immediately right on that negative. And that's not what we need to do. And build up.

Yeah, don't tear down. Build up, you know? And I think it's in Jude 1, 16, where it says there's a whole list of things, but one of the things is fault finders. We're not fault finders.

We shouldn't be doing that. Now, somebody's going to know this first. I don't know the reference, but do not let any wholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.

I think that's another thing that we need to be aware of. Are we building others up? Yes, and then tearing people down. You know, Ecclesiastes 7, verse 1 says, A good name is better than fine perfume.

So when we're slandering somebody, we're basically putting the stink on their name. Yeah, that's good. And you think about a name.

The Jews, the ancient Hebrews, they revered the name of God so much they called him the name Hashem. And in the spelling, it would be G-D, probably because they had no vowels. Yeah, they did not.

But they respected and revered the name of God so much it was Hashem, the name. Yeah, they wouldn't even say the name. They would say the name of the name.

The name of the name, yeah. So Ecclesiastes 7, verse 1, a good name. Would you want somebody saying that about you? I can see that, you know, Bernie.

And you know, the other interesting thing is, is on social media, and I've seen this a lot too, we are so quick to pass that whatever it was that was just said about somebody. Oh, wow, you know, we don't even finish reading it before we pass it. Share it on Facebook.

That's gossiping. We need to have a check in our spirit before we share something like that. Yeah, I agree.

So going back to the book of John, chapter 7, verse 24, it talks about when we judge, we need to make righteous judgments. As Deanne already alluded to, just because we read something or we hear something about somebody doesn't mean we go launch that, broadcast that to the world. I mean, honestly, we need to research.

You know, and even if it is true, give people benefit of the doubt. That's what God does. He gives us benefit of the doubt.

None of us are worthy. You know, we all fall short, but God wants His people to do what He tells us to do. I like the Scripture that says that judges him speaks against the law.

And the law, the part of that that they're talking about is the law of love. That we should love one another and walk in that love. And I think that that is very important.

And if you go to 1 Corinthians and you read all the things that love does, love doesn't bring harm to a person. You go to the book of Philippians, it talks about that. We need to walk in love.

We need to have love for the brethren. And even though they don't deserve it, but we don't either, do we? Think about it. We don't deserve it, but God is still good to us.

Pastor Rick, talk a little bit about God's love, because most all of us in the room, we talked about this as we prayed for everyone, that we've experienced God's love. We know we don't deserve it. We're amazed that He is that way.

But God is love. He's demonstrated it by sending Jesus. But for the listener maybe unfamiliar with this loving God or had a bad dad, a bad father.

So when you talk about this wonderful father God, they're like, my dad was terrible, or I don't know my dad, or he was abusive, or whatever. Talk about the Father's love, God's love. That's good.

That is good. The Father's love. The Bible says that God is love, and that's a characteristic of God.

And as you said, sometimes it's hard for us as a people, because we've been in bad situations, but we can understand too that God's word is infallible. There's no air to it. And God says He is love.

And sometimes we just got to take that by faith. We don't really understand it. But He's a God that He gives.

We see in the book of John 3.16, For God so loved the world, what did He do? He gave. It was because of who He is, because He's a loving God. Yes, we are to fear Him.

Yes, we are to respect Him. All these things. But there is a great part of Him that is love.

And so when we look at my earthly father, who may not have been a great example, the God that we serve is totally different than that, because He is a loving God. And listening, friend, we're not minimizing that there isn't pain, or suffering, or heartache, or you're like, why would a loving God allow this to happen? Some of these situations here on earth, we won't understand till all eternity when we're in His presence, where there's no more sin, or heartache, or suffering. But God provided a way for that eternal bliss, that time when there won't be pain, or tears, or heartache, or sickness.

And so it's coming to know the Lord Jesus. And God demonstrated that love by sending Jesus, who suffered for your sin, for my sin. And so God, if you give Him a chance, that's that James 4, 8, draw near to God, He'll draw near to you, come near to God, He'll come near to you.

Ask Him today to reveal Himself in maybe various ways, to affirm that He loves and cares for you. And trust me, He will demonstrate it in some maybe unique, or unusual, or simple ways. But He does love you, it is the truth, as Pastor Rick mentioned.

And as you read His Scripture, ask Him to reveal His truth and His love for you, and you're going to come along a passage and say, I really sense and feel His love. It's true. Absolutely.

And you know, Mark, a lot of people don't know His love, but I love how it defines it in the Scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 13, it talks about love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not get easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs, love does not delight in evil. See, why would you go out and slander somebody? Love doesn't delight in evil, but it rejoices in the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails. And that's, you know, that's our Father.

And I just love that, how He wants you to know how we are supposed to love. And that is the pattern for us. And we need to learn to walk in that and resist.

Resist the temptation from the evil one of all the accusations and tearing down, you know, and walk in God's love. And Rick, you didn't teach on this. This goes back some months with Pastor Mark, but I'm going back to chapter 1, where if anyone

considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself.

And there's that other passage, you know, in one sense we're saying wonderful things about God, but then we're cutting down people that are made in God's image, and it says my brother, this should not be. And that's a healthy conviction that we've got to be cognizant of the fact, even those maybe a different political party, a different background, maybe people acting out. We don't want to say those evil people.

They're made in God's image. And we've got to be careful what we say about them, because God hasn't given up on them. That is true.

And that's why the Bible tells us that all souls belong to God. So no matter where they are on the face of the earth, God owns them all. And again, we are the ambassadors for Christ, and we are to set an example.

And so we are... Pardon me? Rick, thank you for that. Just thank you for that. You're welcome.

But we are to be that example, so that's why we are to walk in love, walk in unity, and not slander and those kind of things. There's another component to this too. It's about humility.

Why do we gossip? Because we want attention. And it says here, if you're doing this, you're sitting in judgment over the law, but there's only one judge. There's only one God, and guess what? You're not Him.

So don't go down that path. If you're looking at your brother with humility, and showing mercy and love to them, then you're not going to do this. Yeah, that's true.

So the bottom line, along with that Tad, is our job is to love them. We let Christ judge them. He's the judge.

We're not. He has given us the command to love one another, and that's what we're supposed to do. So as we look at these two verses, and we can always move on and go into the next one, but it also says there is one lawgiver, this is what you're talking about, and judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.

But you, who are you to judge your neighbor? But I think we might need to mention, because many people have lost the sense that there is a hell. And there is a heaven, and there is a hell. I know some people maybe don't want to go there or think about hell, but is there a point where somebody, because they don't choose to follow Christ, won't have that eternity with God? That's true.

And unfortunately those who don't make that choice have made their choice. And that's the urgency of the gospel. Because people, I think there's like 153,000 people daily dying.

And you think about that, and you wonder, are they going to heaven or are they going to hell? So we preach a real heaven and a literal hell. And our objective is to share the good news so that that person does not have to go to hell. In actuality, by the definition of hell, it's the absence of God.

And if we don't have God, there's no hope. That's what we need to let people know. Jesus Christ has came, died for humanity, and all you've got to do is receive the free gift.

You don't earn it, the Bible says in Ephesians 2.9, it's not something we work for, it is a free gift. And all you've got to do is receive it. So Pastor Rick, I'm tuning in for the first time.

What's this Mark and friends, and what's this group of people talking about the Bible? I've never read the Bible. I've heard it's like ancient literature or interesting literature. For them, what would you say about having a relationship with God and how to establish that? What are the steps? Because there might be intrigued and say, well, yeah, I think there must be something behind this creation.

I don't think it just happened. Right. But a personal relationship with the God who loves me, how would you walk them into that? First of all, and even like myself, if I go back some 40 years, I was a skeptic.

My wife was living the life, but I was really a skeptic. And finally it got to the point where I decided I'm going to read the Bible for myself. I want to find out, is this really true? And I'll be honest with you, I just dove in, began to read it, and as I was reading it, God was showing me who He really was.

I'm telling you the truth. My wife is sitting right here on my left. I mean, I got to the point, I got so hungry for the Word of God, I couldn't put it down.

I took the Bible to work. I read it on my breaks. I read it on my lunch hour.

I got off at 4.30. As soon as I got home, I read the Bible from the time I got home, literally, until I went to bed. Because God was showing me the intimacy that He wanted to have with me. So there are people today that don't know this Jesus and maybe they don't believe in Jesus Christ.

Maybe they don't believe in the Bible. But I want to challenge you today, begin to read it for yourself. Begin to pray.

Begin to seek God. Ask God some of these tough questions. And I believe with all of my heart, if we really seek Him out, He answers.

And that's why you said in James 4, if we draw near to God, God will draw near to us. And it just takes the first step to seek Him out. Hey Bernie, I don't know if you're praying for the listener right now or you're thinking through maybe your own testimony, but you've loved God's Word.

Was it always something that you knew was inspired? Like, was God breathed, is that interpretation? Like, God spoke through these many authors. Forty-five or so authors. 1,500 years.

And what was the turning point for you to say, God, I believe you are behind this creation and behind me. When I was born again in 1988 and I couldn't put down the Word, I kept reading it over and over. I read the Catholic Bible through and going back to all kinds of Bibles as long as it was the Bible.

And it just jumped out at me. And the same thing now, praying through different books of the Bible. Go through it, the Psalms, 55,000 times, you get 55,000 things coming out of you.

It's alive. Just give it a try. That's also why you don't slander the name of the Lord.

Going back to the topic today. Because you don't slander His name because He is holy and righteous and His Word is pure and alive. Now, Deanne, when you came to know the Lord, did you feel like He was speaking to you or did you look to the Word for answers? Or how did the Bible become alive and the relationship grow? There again, the Bible, the Scriptures say that it is, the Word is alive.

It is the Word of God. I was trying to think of that Scripture that God is the Word. And so it is a living Word.

And once you start reading it, you're going to be a part of that living Word because it's going to speak to you in the ways that you need to be spoken to. I don't know if this is it, but there's that verse, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And I want to share that listening friend because as much as we love the Word of God, the Word is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the Word of God. He's the breath of God. He walked on this earth.

He was man, and yet He was fully God. It's a mystery beyond all of our minds can comprehend, but He demonstrated God's love and His life was taken. Well, He gave up His life.

It wasn't really taken from Him. He surrendered His life because it was the Father's will so that all of us could come to know Him. But Jesus said these unbelievable words, If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father.

So He claimed to be God. And so God sent Him as the Redeemer, as the Savior so that we could be sanctified, that we could walk faithfully with Him, and the gift of the Holy Spirit that He can abide in us so that we can know Jesus better, know His Word. And so listening friend, if you've never taken up the Bible and read it before, have a simple prayer like, God, I don't know if You exist, or I want to believe You exist, but help me interpret the Bible.

Help Your Spirit stir me and understand the truths that You have conveyed here, and help me know You better. And trust me, I promise you, He'll reveal Himself. He loves you, He cares for you, and He created you.

Well, we've got a couple verses done. I think James here will continue with the same passage next week, next Friday. So get in church this weekend.

Get in with a good Bible-believing group of people that love God's Word and loves to see you grow, because you can contribute to that church, that body of believers. You have gifts and talents and ability that God has made for you to share with others. So get in church on this Sunday.

Well, thanks for tuning in. Thanks for being a part of our Radio Listening family. This is Mark Burns and Pastor Rick and Deanne Mulkins with the Ministry of Great News Media and a room of friends.

God bless you and have a great day, night, and weekend. God bless you.