

Don't Do the Devil's Work for Him

1 February 2024



To slander someone is to say something untrue about them to damage their reputation. Slander is totally offensive to God and such a high priority that He included it in the 10 commandments ([Exodus 20:16](#)). The ninth commandment says, '*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.*' Meaning don't spread something that you know is untrue. Slander is deliberately [lying](#) to give others a negative impression of someone. Gossip passes on secrets but slander makes up secrets and pulls others into the lies.

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I have personally been on the receiving end of slander. From false media reports to calculated editing of a video to mislead. Perhaps, more seriously, we have faced deliberate attempts from within our church to damage our reputation. Slander is painful to the individual and a potent danger in the church.

The Greek word for slander in Scripture is 'diabolos', which is the root word for devil – slander comes from the devil. In secular Greek, it means 'backbiter'. Literally, a slanderer is someone who 'casts through', i.e. makes accusations with the intention to destroy. Slander is the work of satan, the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), a natural liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

The apostle Paul lists slander as a behaviour of those who hate God ([Romans 1:30](#)) and James calls it demonic ([James 3:15-16](#)). It quenches the Holy Spirit and is divisive, destructive and discouraging – and its poison is one of Satan's main weapons against the body of Christ.

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We probably don't think of ourselves as slanderers, but be careful! It can be subtle. For example, just adding a bit of drama or humour to a report about someone that reflects badly on them and makes us look good or important – this is slander. Perhaps sharing something negative with someone who doesn't need to know about it, or adding our weight to criticism or speculation about other churches or leaders who we don't know personally. Maybe just a small exaggeration to undermine leadership or to draw sympathy onto ourselves when we're offended. The net effect of all of these is damage to someone's reputation, which is slander.

Why Does God Hate Slander?

1. He hates lying

'But as for...all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur...' (Rev.21:8). *'There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies'* (Proverbs 6:16-19). God is the author of truth ([1 John 5:6](#)) and all lies are opposite to His character and therefore abhorrent to Him.

2. It is stealing

'A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold.' (Proverbs 22:1). When we slander, we damage something that belongs to someone else: their treasure. God knows and hates when we speak evil of others, so *'speak evil of no one'* ([Titus 3:2](#)). He will hold us accountable for every careless word that damages others ([Matthew 12:36](#)) and we're instructed to *'put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander'* ([1 Peter 2:1](#)).

3. It belongs to our old, sinful nature

'In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.' (Colossians 3:7-8). Our speech is now devoted to the glory of God *'Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.'* (Ephesians 4:29).

4. It kills our worship

'With it [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.' (James 3:9-10) We were created for [worship](#), and worship and slander cannot co-exist.

Inoculation Against Slander

God's solution for slander is to [love each other](#) ([John 13:34](#)). We don't slander people we love, because 'Love...rejoices with the truth' ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)). Love wants the best for others and guards their reputations as jealously as we do our own.

... slander is rooted in making ourselves look better to others

The first battle is within, because slander is rooted in making ourselves look better to others, beginning with our own internal thoughts, offences and justifications. We have to take captive those thoughts and determine that our words should now be perfume-scented with the fragrance of Christ, not the stench of pollution.

Slander comes from a sick heart. *'But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts — murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander'* ([Matthew 15:18-19](#)). Sickness in the heart from bitterness ([Hebrews 12:15](#)), unresolved hurt ([1 Peter 3:14-16](#)), unforgiveness ([Ephesians 4:32](#)), jealousy ([Galatians 5:20](#)), or other sins of the heart. To protect against slander, we must face and deal with any of these areas that remain. Own up and trust God and church family to help us heal.

Fight to Protect Others

To fight slander, we must become a people who no one wants to slander around. Any attempt to pass on slander is met with a response like:

- Have you taken this to the individual concerned? I'm happy to help you do that.
- Can I check, do I need to know this? Do you want me to support reconciliation?
- Let me help you put away '*...all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander...*' ([Ephesians 4:31](#)) and let's guard this person's reputation like treasure.

We want nothing unnecessarily damaging done to anyone's reputation.

We don't want anyone we love to act like a God-hater ([Romans 1:30](#)). As we deepen our love for one another, we will protect against all attempts at slander, even the subtle ones. We want nothing unnecessarily damaging done to anyone's reputation. We will need to show grace and support when we slip, perhaps unintentionally, but by fighting all slander through *speaking the truth in love* ([Ephesians 4:15](#)) we do direct damage to the work of our enemy.

This article was reviewed on 1 February 2024. It was originally published on the Four12 Global website on 20 March 2019.