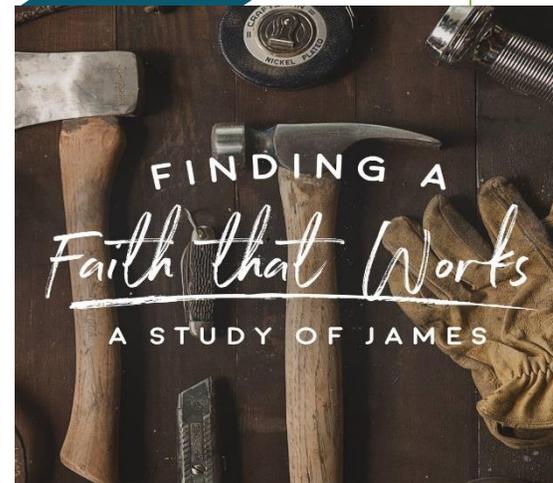


JAMES: FINDING A FAITH THAT WORKS

Lesson 13 - FAITH RESCUES THE WANDERING - James 5:19-20

INTRODUCTION/THOUGHTS

- You will struggle to find a New Testament epistle that seems to end more abruptly than James (1 John is the only one that comes close.) There is no closing statement, summary, or concluding address. James finishes with an emphatic closing sentence.
- It feels as though James desires to impress on his readers' hearts the weight of this last thought. Christians should seek to restore wandering Christians.
 - This is often a tough topic to discuss amongst Christians. How far is too far? When do we mind our own business? How can we tell the difference between a wandering Christian and someone who is lost that may have professed faith at an earlier time?
- Not all of these questions are answered in this text, but James gives us several simple impactful truths if we will understand and apply them.
 1. Any Christian can progressively wander from the truth.
 2. Any Christian can be a part of turning and restoring one who strays.
 3. Acting in love helps the wanderer and glorifies God.



1. ANY CHRISTIAN CAN PROGRESSIVELY WANDER FROM THE TRUTH.

James 5:19 - Brethren, if any (orig. - *tis*) of you do err from the truth, and one (orig. - *tis*) convert him;

Let's notice a few things about the verse.

- a. The word James uses for those that can stray means literally *anyone*.
 - It is clear that no one is beyond being deceived or wandering from God. It is dangerous to assume this of ourselves or anyone else.
- b. Notice what the wanderer is erring or straying from... the truth.
 - This is why Christians and the church body must be truth focused not opinion focused.
 - This gives urgency to the situation. It is not personal. They are not straying from opinion, choice, or us as a people; they are straying from God.
 - This gives us our starting point in trying to help turn them back. We are turning someone back to God and His Word.
 - When someone strays, it is in conduct and creed. It is in deed and doctrine. Someone can adhere to proper actions for a time without submitting to proper truth. This is where are focus must be. Notice that James focuses on turning them toward truth, not simply modifying their actions.

Let the power of God's Spirit unleash the truth of God's Word.

- c. However, the book of James has given us plenty of symptoms to diagnose a wandering heart.

2. ANY CHRISTIAN CAN BE A PART OF TURNING AND RESTORING THE ONE WHO STRAYS.

Notice that the word for "any" in verse 19 is the same word for "one" in verse 19. He does not declare a need for church leadership or elders. Any and all of us have the ability and responsibility to help restore.

Many Christians will avoid restoring a sinning or straying believer because of...

1. Uncomfortable and awkward feeling
2. Uncertainty of the state of the believer
3. Fear of overstepping and appearing judgmental.

Things to note about the turning and restoring of believers...

- a. The concern is for God's glory and the individual's soul.
- b. This process is anchored in prayer. (vs. 13-18)
 - If we are obeying verse 16, verses 19-20 should not be as difficult or abrupt. Verse 16 is a helpful vaccine for a wandering heart.
- c. **"Christian intervention cannot happen until there has been Christian intercession."**
- d. It is a good time for self-examination and considering our own position in Christ. We cannot examine the course of another soul unless we are willing to judge our own.
- d. We are not given a point or a length at which we should stop our efforts.

Illustration of Peter -

3. ACTING IN LOVE HELPS THE WANDERER AND GLORIFIES GOD.

James 5:20 - 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

It is obvious that this is a spiritual work. It is something the church has been instructed to do.

The end of verse 20 is a direct reference to Proverbs 10:12. (See 1 Peter 4:8) We must understand that the love of Christ covers all sin through the Gospel. As followers of Christ, when we seek to extend the love of God to others it contributes to the work of the Gospel.

So, we come to the "abrupt" ending of the letter. We could do a summary lesson recapping all the things James has been teaching. However, the book ends this way for a reason. We know from James that true faith produces consistent Christ-like works. We are called to examine our own lives. **Does our faith work?**

I believe the conclusion of book brings us to a two-fold thought.

1. People may be wandering from God within the church but go unnoticed and unpursued because of our own self-centered focus and our lack of focus on Christ.
2. Because we are not living with true faith, people are not being restored in the church.

Through Jesus, may God help us do better.

FAMILY DISCUSSION / PERSONAL STUDY

The Book of James teaches us that true faith reveals itself by works. What we do in our Christian life is fueled by what we believe.

Take time together as a family in God's Word. Think throughout the day to reinforce the main truth of the week. Remember significant ways God has worked in your lives.

TAKE TIME

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

THINK

Wandering away from the faith may involve several of the following problems: a sin trap that can't seem to be overcome, persuasive false teaching/teachers, isolation because of fear, confusion about who the real enemy is, focusing on hypocritical Christians, or willful choices to please self instead of God. What type of wanderer have you encountered? What type of wanderer have you been?

REMEMBER

Read Proverbs 27:6 - Can you recall a time that God used a friend to direct you back to truth? Spend time thanking God for that experience and ask Him to use you to do the same.