

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

RESCUING THE WAYWARD: JAMES 5:19-20

1. **INTRODUCTION: “RESCUING THE WAYWARD”**
 - A. THERE ARE CERTAIN **OCCUPATIONS** THAT ARE **MEANT TO RESCUE** AND TO **SAVE LIVES**:
 1. PARAMEDICS,
 2. EMTS,
 3. DOCTORS,
 4. FIREFIGHTERS,
 5. POLICE.
 - B. AND **JAMES ADDS** TO THAT LIST **CHRISTIANS!**
 1. “My dear **brothers** and **sisters...**”
 2. EACH OF US MAY **KNOW “SOMEONE” WHO NEEDS RESCUING**:
 - a. **THEY ARE SINKING AND NEED “SOMEONE” TO LOWER A LIFE RAFT... THEY ARE FREE FALLING AND NEED A PARACHUTE.**
 - C. IN TODAY'S SCRIPTURE **JAMES ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS TO RESCUE THE WAYWARD.**
 1. **James 5:19-20 (NLT)** “My dear **brothers** and **sisters**, if **someone** among you wanders away from the **truth** and is **brought back**, you can be sure that **whoever** brings the sinner **back** will **save** that person from **death** and bring about the **forgiveness** of many **sins.**”
 2. THE **TITLE OF TODAY'S STUDY IS “RESCUING THE WAYWARD” BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT JAMES ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS TO DO IN 5:19-20.**
 - D. THIS STUDY IS **DIVIDED INTO THREE “OPPORTUNITIES” RELATING TO “RESCUING THE WAYWARD” FOLLOWED BY THE DESIRED “RESULTS”**:
 1. THE **FIRST “OPPORTUNITY”: RESTORATION SHOULD BE OUR PLAN.**
 2. THE **SECOND “OPPORTUNITY”: CAUTION SHOULD BE OUR CALL.**
 3. THE **THIRD “OPPORTUNITY”: CONVERSION SHOULD BE OUR GOAL.**
2. THE **FIRST “OPPORTUNITY”: RESTORATION SHOULD BE OUR PLAN.**
 - A. “**James 5:19-20 (NLT)** “My dear **brothers** and **sisters**, if **someone** among you wanders **away** from the **truth** and is **brought back**, you can be sure that **whoever** brings the sinner **back** will **save** that person from **death** and bring about the **forgiveness** of many **sins.**”
 - B. “**WHOEVER BRINGS THE SINNER BACK**” DESCRIBES A **BELIEVER WHO SEES A NEED AND THE NEED IS “SOMEONE” WHO “WANDERS AWAY FROM THE TRUTH”**.
 1. THEY HAVE “**STRAYED**” FROM THEIR **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD** AND THIS “**WHOEVER**” **NOTICES, AND THEY CARE.**
 - a. THE “**brothers** and **sisters**” **BECOME THE AGENTS OF RESTORATION AND REVIVAL FOR THE BELIEVER WHO “WANDERS”**.
 - b. THE **BIBLICAL WORD IS “RESTORATION”**.
 - 1) **Galatians 6:1 (NASB)** “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you who are spiritual, restore such a one** in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”
 - 2) “**RESTORATION**” USED HERE MEANS **BRINGING PEOPLE “BACK”, GIVING THEM A PARACHUTE OR A LIFE RAFT.**
 - 3) “**RESTORATION**” SHOULD **ALWAYS BEGIN WITH CARING.**

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- C. **CONCLUSION:** “**RESTORATION**” SHOULD BE THE **BELIEVERS PLAN** FOR **ALL** “**BROTHERS AND SISTERS**” WHO HAVE “**WANDERED FROM THE TRUTH**”.
3. **OUR SECOND “OPPORTUNITY”:** A **CAUTION** SHOULD BE OUR **CALL**.
- A. **James 5:19-20 (NLT)** “My dear brothers and sisters, if **someone** among you **wanders** away from the truth and **is brought back**, you can be sure that **whoever brings the sinner back** will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.”
- B. **THOSE VERSES INDICATE THAT WHEN “WHOEVER” NOTICES A CHRISTIAN “WANDERING AWAY” FROM THE “TRUTH”, A CAUTION SHOULD BE ISSUED.**
1. THAT “**BROTHER**” OR “**SISTER**” SHOULD **GET INVOLVED** AND “**CAUTION**” THE **PERSON WHO “WANDERS”**.
- a. THE **GOAL** OF THE “**CAUTION**” SHOULD BE A **SPIRITUAL REAWAKENING... REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION**.
- C. **MANY OF US KNOW “SOMEONE” WHO HAS “WANDERED” FROM THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**
1. **JAMES INDICATES THAT “SOMEONE” WHO “WANDERS” SHOULD BE “RESTORED”.**
- a. **WHEN WE DO WE ARE LOWERING A LIFEBOAT BECAUSE THEIR SHIP IS SINKING.**
- b. **OR, WE’RE GIVING THEM A PARACHUTE BECAUSE THEY ARE ABOUT TO CRASH.**
- D. **FACT: IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MOST BELIEVERS TO GET INVOLVED BELIEVERS LIVES WHO “STRAY/WANDER” AND “CAUTION” THEM... SO HERE ARE TWO PRACTICAL THINGS WE CAN DO FIRST:**
1. **NOTE: THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN PRIOR TO “CAUTION” WILL BE COVERED IN DEPTH IN THE NEXT TWO SECTIONS, WHICH ARE “CONVERSION SHOULD BE OUR GOAL” AND “RESULTS OF RESTORATION”.**
2. **FIRST, EVALUATE OUR OWN FAITH... TAKE A PERSONAL “FAITH” INVENTORY.**
- a. **1 Corinthians 10:12-13a (NLT)** “If you **think** you are **standing strong**, **be careful not to fall**. The **temptations in your life are no different** from what others experience.”
- b. **STORYTIME: EDINBURGH CASTLE WAS BELIEVED TO BE IMPREGNABLE BECAUSE IT WAS BUILT ON TOP OF A MESA SURROUNDED BY ROCKY STEEP CLIFFS, ONE OF WHICH WAS CONSIDERED IMPOSSIBLE TO SCALE. HOWEVER, ON MARCH 14, 1314, THIRTY SCOTS CLIMED THE CLIFF THAT WAS CONSIDERED IMPOSSIBLE TO SCALE... SURPRISED THE GARRISON AND CAPTURED THE CASTLE.**
- c. **THE POINT: EDINBURGH CASTLE WAS CAPTURED AT IT’S STRONGEST POINT!**

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d. APPLICATION: IF WE “**THINK**” OUR **FAITH** IS TOO **STRONG** TO BE **TESTED** IN ANY GIVEN **AREA**, PAUL WROTE...

1) 1 Corinthians 10:12 (NLT) “If you **think** you are **standing strong**, **be careful not to fall.**”

e. SO, BEFORE WE **CAUTION** “**SOMEONE**” WHO HAS “**WANDERED**” FROM THEIR **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**... WE SHOULD **EXAMINE OUR OWN WALK!**

3. THE **SECOND PRACTICAL THING** WE SHOULD DO BEFORE WE **CAUTION** “**SOMEONE**” WHEN WE NOTICE THEM “**WANDERING**” IS TO **ENCOURAGE** THEM WHEN WE SEE THEM **MAKING ANY MOVE TOWARD** THEIR **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**.

E. **SUMMATION:**

1. WHEN WE SEE SOMEBODY **MAKING A MOVE TOWARD GOD**... **ENCOURAGE** THAT.

2. WHEN WE SEE SOMEBODY **WANDERING AWAY FROM THE FAITH**, **CAUTION** THAT.

4. OUR **THIRD “OPPORTUNITY”**: **CONVERSION SHOULD BE OUR GOAL**.

A. James 5:19-20 (NASB) “My brethren, if any among you **strays** (“**wanders**” NLT) from the truth and **one turns him back**, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his **way** will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

B. WE GET OUR WORD “**PLANET**” FROM THE **GREEK** WORD FOR “**STRAYS**” (GK. = **PERIPLANILEMAI** OR **PLANAŌ**).

1. UNLIKE **STARS**, WHICH **KEEP THEIR PLACE** IN RELATION TO OTHER HEAVENLY LIGHTS, **PLANETS** APPEAR TO “**STRAY**” AND **WANDER** THROUGH THE NIGHT SKY.

a. IN THE SAME WAY, THE CHRISTIANS IN **VERSE 19** HAVE “**STRAYED**” AND “**WANDERED**” FROM THE **STRAIGHT PATH**... THE “**TRUTH**”

C. **NOTE: PEOPLE “STRAY”/“WANDER” FROM THE “TRUTH” IN TWO WAYS:**

1. THEY “**STRAY**”/“**WANDER**” FROM THE “**TRUTH**” **DOCTRINALLY**.

a. THEY **ERR** IN THEIR **BELIEFS**.

2. THEY CAN ALSO “**STRAY**” FROM THE “**TRUTH**” **PRACTICALLY:**

a. BY **FAILING TO ALIGN** THEIR **PRACTICE** WITH THEIR **PROFESSION**.

1) THOSE CHRISTIANS ARE SOMETIMES CALLED “**BACKSLIDERS**”.

D. IN EITHER CASE, THE **RESPONSE** OF **HEALTHY BELIEVERS** TO THOSE “**BROTHERS AND SISTERS**” SHOULD BE THE **SAME**... WE SHOULD **HELP** “**TURN**” THOSE WHO HAVE “**STRAYED**” “**BACK**” TO THE “**TRUTH**”.

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1. THE GREEK WORD FOR “TURN BACK” (EPISTREPHO) MEANS TO TURN AROUND AND HEAD IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION... A 180-DEGREE REVERSAL.
- E. JAMES SAYS THAT SOME BELIEVERS, AFTER MAKING PROGRESS ALONG THE “WAY” OF LIFE, CAN “STRAY” ... HEAD IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.
 1. ... AND THOSE PEOPLE NEED A FIRM YET GRACIOUS INTERVENTION (CAUTION) TO AVOID GOD’S DISCIPLINE.
- F. CONSIDER: ALL CHRISTIANS ARE NOT EQUIPPED WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR “TURNING” “WANDERING” SAINTS “BACK” TOWARD THE RIGHT “WAY”... THE “TRUTH”.
 1. Galatians 6:1 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.
 - a. SO THE BELIEVER WHO INTERVENES IN THE LIFE OF A WANDERING BROTHER OR SISTER IN CHRIST MUST BE SPIRITUAL, GENTLE, WISE, AND HUMBLE!
 - 1) FLESHLY, HARSH, AND ARROGANT CHRISTIANS HAVE NO BUSINESS TRYING TO RESCUE THE “WANDERING”... ALTHOUGH, THEY ARE OFTEN THE VERY ONES WHO TRY TO DO SO.
 - i. IF A CHRISTIAN RELISHES THE IDEA OF CONFRONTING ANOTHER BELIEVER, HE OR SHE PROBABLY SHOULDN’T.
 - ii. IF THE ONE WHO CAUTIONS/CONFRONTS THE “WANDERING” SOUL ASSUMES A HOLIER-THAN-THOU ATTITUDE... THE INTERVENTION WILL DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD.
- G. WE MUST PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER CAUTIONING THOSE WHO “WANDER” FROM THE FAITH.
- H. OUR GOAL IN GETTING INVOLVED IN OTHER PEOPLE’S LIVES IS SO THEY WILL BE “TURNED BACK”.
- I. SUMMARY:
 1. RESTORATION SHOULD BE OUR PLAN.
 2. A CAUTION SHOULD BE OUR CALL.
 3. CONVERSION SHOULD BE OUR GOAL.
5. THE RESULTS OF RESTORATION:

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- A. **James 5:19-20 (NASB)** “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way **will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.**”
- B. **FIRST: JAMES SAYS THAT WHEN WE HELP “TURN” A WANDERING/SINNING CHRISTIAN FROM THE “ERROR OF HIS OR HER WAY” IT “WILL SAVE THEIR SOUL FROM DEATH.”**
1. GIVEN THE **JEWISH CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND** OF THIS LETTER, IT SEEMS MOST LIKELY THAT THE “**DEATH**” HERE REFERS TO THE “**WAY OF DEATH**” WHICH MEANS A DARK, “**DEATH-LIKE**” EXISTENCE.
 - a. IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, **LIFE** WAS VIEWED AS FOLLOWING **ONE OF TWO PATHS**, AND THAT WAS SUMMED UP IN THE OPENING LINE OF THE FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH CHRISTIAN WRITING, THE **DIDACHE** (DID-uh-kee) WHICH WAS AN IMPORTANT **TRANSITION DOCUMENT** FROM **JUDAISM** TO **CHRISTIANITY**:
 - 1) THE DIDACHE SAID, “THERE ARE **TWO PATHS**: THE **PATH OF LIFE** AND THE **PATH OF DEATH**, AND THERE IS A **VAST DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN THESE **TWO PATHS**”.
 - 2) THE **GREEK** WORD FOR “**PATH**” OR “**WAY**” IS **HODOS** AND IT REFERS EITHER (1) **LITERALLY** TO A **ROAD** OR (2) **FIGURATIVELY** TO A **LIFESTYLE**.
 - 3) IN 5:20, JAMES USES “**HODOS**” TO DESCRIBE THE **WAYWARD** CHRISTIAN’S **LIFESTYLE** AS THE “**ERROR OF HIS “WAY” (HODOS).**”
 - 4) SO, JAMES HAS THE **FIGURATIVE** USE OF THE TERM “**HODOS**” IN MIND... **NOT PHYSICAL DEATH BUT A LIFESTYLE CHARACTERIZED BY A DEATH-LIKE EXISTENCE.**
- C. **SECOND: JAMES SAYS THAT WHEN WE HELP “TURN” A WANDERING/SINNING CHRISTIAN FROM THE “ERROR OF HIS OR HER WAY” IT “WILL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS.”**
1. THIS HAS A **DOUBLE APPLICATION**.
 - a. NOT ONLY DOES A PERSON’S **CONFESSION OF SIN** (1) BRING **FORGIVENESS** FOR THE **WAYWARD PATH** HE OR SHE TOOK, **BUT** (2) IT ALSO HELPS TO **PREVENT** THAT PERSON FROM **CONTINUING FARTHER** ALONG THAT **DEAD-END ROAD** (“**WAY**”) OF **SIN** AND A **DEATH-LIKE EXISTENCE**.
 - 1) **BECAUSE** THE **DAMAGE** THAT THE **REBELLIOUS WANDERING CHRISTIAN’S SINS HAVE DONE** AND **COULD STILL DO** WILL BE “**COVERED**”.
 - 2) **PETER** USES THE SAME TERM FOR “**COVER**” (**KALYPTŌ**) WHEN HE SAYS:

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- i. **1 Peter 4:8 (NLT)** “Most important of all, continue to show **deep love** for each other, for love **covers** a multitude of sins.”
- 3) **NOTE: THE INTERVENTION OF LOVING CHRISTIANS THROUGH PRAYER, PATIENCE, AND PERSEVERANCE WILL “SAVE” THAT PERSON FROM COMMITTING MORE SIN AND MAKING A GREATER MESS OF THEIR LIFE.**
2. **JAMES ISN’T HEDGING ON HIS CLAIM THAT “REAL FAITH PRODUCES GENUINE PATIENCE/”ENDURANCE” IN JAMES 1:2-4, BUT SOMETIMES OTHER BELIEVERS MUST STEP FORWARD AND ACCOMPANY THEIR PRAYERS FOR WAYWARD SAINTS WITH DELIBERATE WORDS AS WELL AS ACTIONS... “WORKS”.**
 - a. **DON’T FORGET THAT JAMES ALSO WROTE THAT “REAL FAITH PRODUCES GENUINE WORKS” IN CHRISTIANS.**
 - 1) **James 2:14-18 (NASB)** “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has **no works**? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? Even so **faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.** But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**"
 - 2) **AND ONE OF THOSE “WORKS” IS RESCUING WAYWARD CHRISTIANS.**
- D. **CONCLUSION: IF YOU’RE CONSIDERING GETTING INVOLVED IN THE LIFE OF A STRAYING BELIEVER WITH A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT OR WITH CORRECTION:**
 1. **FIRST... CHECK YOUR MOTIVES:**
 - a. **MAKE CERTAIN YOU’RE ACTING OUT OF GENUINE LOVE FOR THAT PERSON.**
 2. **SECOND... BE SURE YOU’VE IMMERSSED YOURSELF IN PRAYER.**
 3. **THIRD... BE READY TO APPLY PATIENCE AS YOU ENDURE A LONG PROCESS.**
 - a. **BECAUSE MOST WAYWARD SAINTS DO NOT SUDDENLY “TURN” AROUND BECAUSE OF A TAP ON THEIR SHOULDER.**
 - 1) **IT CAN TAKE A LONG, LONG TIME.**
 4. **FOURTH... REMEMBER... “BUT GOD”.**
 - a. **YOU ARE NOT IN THE “MINISTRY OF RECONCILLATION” ALONE!**
 - 1) **2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (NASB)** “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all

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these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,