

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

1:2-12	How to respond to trials
1:13-18	How to respond to temptation
1:19-27	How to respond to God's Word
2:1-13	How to view people
2:14-26	How to tell the difference between living faith and dead faith
3:1-12	Why we should control our tongues
3:13-18	How to know if you have godly wisdom
4:1-10	How to deal with personal conflict
4:11-12	Why we should not judge others
4:13-17	How to respond to God's sovereignty in our lives
5:1-6	How to know if you are materialistic
5:7-12	How to respond when life is not fair
5:13-18	The priority and power of prayer

5:19-20 - *My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one brings him back, let him know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

James concludes with a call for commitment to mutual _____ and _____ within the church.

First, we have a responsibility to deal with our _____ sin

- 5:16 - *Therefore, confess your sin to one another, and pray for one another*

Q: Why?

A: So that our sin does not take us to the point of the man in vv. 14-15 who never dealt with his sin. He is either:

- Physically sick due to divine chastening on his unrepentant sin
- Spiritually weak (he's not responding well to the hardships of life and has hit rock bottom)

The point: Deal with your sin quickly and completely before it takes you further than you want to go (keep short accounts with sin)

Second, we have a responsibility to one another—to help rescue another believer who has _____ from the path of righteousness

- We are to be our brother's keeper
- Alfred Plummer - *"There is something fatally wrong about us if we have no strong desire to bring sinners back to God."*

★ 5:19-20 is a spiritual mandate to us to attempt to restore a professing believer who is living in unrepentant sin

OUR SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION

Step ①: _____ a straying brother

v. 19a - *My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth...*

Q: What is the true spiritual condition of this person who is straying from the truth?

- **Option 1:** The straying person is a professing believer who is _____ a genuine Christian
 - See James 2:14-26 (“dead faith”)
 - A person can claim to be a Christian and not be one (they have a dead, non-saving faith in Jesus Christ like the demons)
 - *sinner* (hamartōlos) in v. 20, when used elsewhere in the New Testament, usually refers to unbelievers
 - James’ command: You must confront those professing believers within the church who are not really Christians
- **Option 2:** The straying person is a Christian who has _____ into sin
 - v. 19 - *My brethren, if any among you strays*
 - James’ command: You must warn other Christians about sin in their lives and the need to deal with it
- **Option 3:** The straying person is a professing believer _____ church
 - v. 19 - *My brethren, if any among you strays*
 - Those among us are professing believers, but the problem is that we cannot know the true spiritual condition of others
 - James’ command: You must go after a professing Christian who has associated himself with your congregation and who is straying from the truth

strays from the truth depicts the image of path

- Scripture often uses the image of a path or a road to describe the life of obedience to God
 - Psa. 1 - ¹*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners...⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*
 - Psa. 23 - ¹*The LORD is our Shepherd...³He guides me in the paths of righteousness*
 - Matthew 7:14 - *the way is narrow that leads to life*
 - Ezekiel 36:27 - *I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes*
- In Scripture, “straying from the path” describes human sin
 - Isaiah 53:6 - *All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way.*
 - Psalms 119:176 - *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.*
 - The point: Even those who are familiar with Scripture can still stray from it
 - 1 Corinthians 10:12 - *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.*

Q: How is it that a believer strays? [5:19 - *if any among you strays (planaō)*]

- James 1 - ¹³*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶Do not be deceived (planaō) my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above (God's goodness), coming down from the Father of lights (God's greatness), with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow (God's immutability).*

A: We lose _____ of the truth about God (we think _____ about who He is)

- Every time we choose to sin, we have a flawed view of who God is at that moment.
- _____ always betrays _____

It is possible for each of us to stray. So, we are to be alert not only to our own straying, but to the straying of others. This is the heart of Christ:

- Matthew 18 - ⁶*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble...¹²What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? ¹³If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. ¹⁴So, it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.*

Step ②: _____ a spiritual rescue

v. 19 - ...if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back...

- Any believer in the body who loves his fellow member should attempt a spiritual rescue.
- In OT times, God had laws for rescuing animals who had gone astray:
You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman (Deuteronomy 22:1).
- If we don't try to rescue a brother or sister from their sin, what we're actually doing is _____ their sin (see Ezekiel 3:17-19)
- R.V.G. Tasker - *"No duty laid upon Christians is more in keeping with the mind of their Lord, or more expressive of Christian love, than the duty of reclaiming the backslider: and it is very certain that such a work cannot be accomplished except by prayer and personal effort."*

"to turn" or "to turn back" or "return" is an OT expression for _____

- Deuteronomy 30 - ¹*So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I've set before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you ²and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I have commanded you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you.*

In the New Testament, "to turn" refers to the repentance of:

- Unbelievers unto salvation (8x in Acts)
 - Acts 26 - ¹⁷*I am sending you, ¹⁸to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. ¹⁹"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.*
 - 1 Thes. 1:9 - you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God
- _____
 - Luke 22:31-32 - *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*

How exactly are we to carry out this rescue?

- James hints at it (v. 20): *let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way*
- Matthew 18
 - The importance of rescuing a straying believer (vv. 12-14):
Leave the ninety-nine and go after the one who has strayed
 - How to rescue a straying believer (vv. 15-17):
¹⁵*If your brother sins, [STEP 1] go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen to you, [STEP 2] take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, [STEP 3] tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, [STEP 4] let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

↓
Doctrinal
or moral
error

Attitudes required in our spiritual search and rescue

① Genuine _____ for the person

- Matthew 18:12-14
- 2 Thessalonians 3:15 - *Do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

② An eagerness to _____

- Matthew 18:21-22 - *Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”*

③ _____

- Galatians 6:1a - *Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...*

④ _____

- Galatians 6:1b - *...each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*
- Matthew 7:4-5 - *How can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*

Q: Are these the attitudes you have had in response to a fellow Christian who has strayed from the path and was in spiritual danger?

Q: Right now, do you know a professing believer who is currently straying from the path of righteousness? If so, you must attempt a search and rescue operation.

We have this command from:

- Christ in Matthew 18:15-18
- Paul in Galatians 6:1
- James in James 5:19

Step ③: Consider the serious _____

v. 20 - *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.*

let him know

- Think about what's at stake if we act and what's at stake if we don't act
- The stakes are so high, this is not an option

The serious results of acting (or not acting)

1. [We] *will save his soul from death*

- God does the saving, but we can be an _____ in His hands to rescue someone else...
 - from eternal death (if they are not a Christian)
 - from divine chastening (if they are a Christian)
 - physical illness (James 5:14-15)
 - physical death (1 Corinthians 11:30 and 1 John 5:16)
- James 1:15 - *when [the] sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*
 - ↓
 - “completion” } One sin gives birth to another sin of the same kind,
“maturity” } which gives birth to another sin of the same kind,
“full grown” } which gives birth to yet another, etc.
 - ↓
 - As someone commits the same sin over and over again and it becomes a pattern, it leads to destruction & eventually death
- The point: By rescuing a person from their sin, we _____ the pattern of sin in their life and keep them from the destruction & potential death that comes if they kept sinning
 - Proverbs 13:14 - *The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*
 - Proverbs 14:27 - *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*

2. [We] *will cover a multitude of sins*

- James is not talking about the power of love to overlook personal wrongs
 - Proverbs 10:12 - *Love covers all transgressions*
 - 1 Peter 4:8 - *Love covers a multitude of sins*
- *cover* (kalyptō) = “to forgive”; “to cause to be forgiven”; “to pardon”
 - Psalm 32:1 - *How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered (epkalyphō)!* } Divine forgiveness
 - Psalm 85:2 - *You forgave the iniquity of your people; You covered (kalyptō) all their sin.* } Hebrew parallelism

Proverbs 11:30 - *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.*

Let's go forth and capture souls for the kingdom!

Why would James end his letter with this message?

This seems like an abrupt ending, but there is application for us beyond the specific command of rescuing someone who is in sin.

① **James gives us a word of _____ about mutual care and concern for each other**

- By nature, we tend to be selfish and to think about ourselves, so James is reminding us here and encouraging us to remember that we should have a mutual care for each another.
- Not only are we to obey the commands he laid out for us in his letter, but we should have concern that others obey these commands as well.

② **James gives us a word of _____:**
Anyone of us is susceptible of _____ from the _____

③ **James gives us a word of _____ to not take our sin (or anyone else's sin) _____**

- Sin is a terrible, devastating thing.
 - If we feed it, it will destroy us.
 - If we don't confront it in someone else, it could destroy them.

④ **James gives us a word of _____**

- James acknowledges the reality and possibility that even true believers can stray, but when they return (repent and come back to God) there is forgiveness.
 - This turning back to God can be
 - self-initiated (James 5:14-16)
 - initiated by a fellow Christian (James 5:19-20)
- The same James that said "*obedience will accompany true faith*" (2:24) is the same James that reminds us that there is always grace and forgiveness from "*a multitude of sins*" (5:20) at the foot of the cross.

James gives us ____ commands in his 108 verses (the highest percentage of commands in any book of the Bible), and yet James ends his letter with a word of grace.

The very last words of James remind us that when we fail to live up to those commands, if we repent, then God in His grace, will cover a multitude of sins.