

Slide 1

Love The Missing

JAMES 5:19-20

Introduction

1. When was the last time you sat down with a piece of paper, wrote a letter by hand to someone and sent it through the mail?
2. A news poll done by CBS almost a year ago, September 14-20, 2021, found that 37% of adults in this country say it has been at least five years since they've written and sent a personal letter.
3. Fifteen percent of adults have never written and sent a personal letter.
4. Today, some of us may sit down at the computer and sent an e-mail, but I dare say that the majority of us sent a text, a tweet or some other blurb electronically to communicate our thoughts to others.
5. All of the letters we find in the New Testament were written by hand and then hand delivered to their intended recipient, whether the recipient was an individual or a congregation.
6. What is interesting is how so many of those letters end. Consider for a moment this letter by James to Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, and the way in which Paul concludes many of his letters.
7. Paul often ended his letters with greetings to the brothers and sisters in Christ along with prayers asking God's blessing on his work and on the church.
8. James, however, ends his letter with a call to action.
9. Throughout this letter, he has been concerned with how the Christians in Asia Minor lived out their faith and the things which tended to push their fellow believers away from Christ and His church:
 - a. The way in which the rich brethren treated those who were poor.
 - b. The damage done within the church by jealousy and selfish ambition.
 - c. The harm done by the tongue and by their judging one another.
 - d. Quarrels and fights amongst themselves.

10. Now, as he concludes this letter, he calls upon his readers, and by extension, each of us gathered here today, to reach out to those of our number who have wandered away in an effort to bring them back.

[Let's look at what he had to say, starting first with . . .]

Slide 2

I. The Possibility of Wandering Away

A. STRAYING FROM THE TRUTH

"My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth . . ." (*James 5:19a, NASB95*).

1. How is it that we stray or wander from the truth?
 - a. Sometimes, we wander because we "take our eye off the ball" or we "look back."
 - 1) Our focus is diverted to the things which this world has to offer.
 - 2) In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus spoke of three things which cause us to "take our eye off the ball" — "the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things" (*Mark 4:19*).
 - 3) We "look back" when we begin to desire the position, privileges or possessions we used to have prior to becoming a Christian.
 - b. Sometimes, we wander because we are "led astray" by someone who tells us they have our best interests at heart, but who in truth is thinking about their own interests.
 - c. In these cases, we are like the sheep who keeps pursuing greener grass only to find themselves having wandered away from the flock.
2. There is another important point which James makes here — it is the fact that our wandering or straying is in a direction away "from the truth."
3. The truth is not just what we believe, but what we practice as well.
 - a. It is that which David said God desires in our innermost being (*Psalm 51:6*).

"Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden

part You will make me know wisdom.” (Psalm 51:6, NASB95)

- b. It is that which Paul said we obey (Galatians 5:7).

“You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?”
(Galatians 5:7, NASB95)

- c. It is that which according to Jesus and the apostle John, we practice
(John 3:21, 20; 1 John 1:6).

“But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”” (**John 3:21, NASB95**)

“For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” (**John 3:20, NASB95**)

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;” (**1 John 1:6, NASB95**)

4. The very fact that you and I can stray from it indicates there is a truth to which we must hold fast.

Slide 3

B. TWO WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY STRAY — INTELLECTUALLY AND BEHAVIORALLY

1. The intellectual side of our straying involves our doctrine, what we believe and teach.
2. The behavioral side of our straying involves our morals, the way we live.
3. Each of these can affect the other:
 - a. What we choose to believe, our doctrine, affects the way we live.
 - b. The way we choose to live, in turn affects our doctrine, what we believe.
4. When we stray behaviorally, we find ourselves looking for passages of Scripture which seem to support the way we are choosing to live.
5. When we stray intellectually, we begin to believe things which Scripture does not teach. This in turn changes the way we find ourselves living.
6. According to James, our goal as Christians is twofold:

- a. First, we seek to turn our brother or sister in Christ back to the truth from which he or she has strayed.
- b. Second, we seek to turn him or her “from the error of his way” (v. 20).

Slide 4

II. The Blessing of Spiritual Restoration

A. RESTORATION SAVES A SOUL FROM DEATH

“let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death . . .” (James 5:20, NASB95)

1. James said that when you or I turn a “sinner” back, we save his or her soul from death.
2. The death of which he speaks is spiritual death — the condemnation of both body and soul in an eternal torment away from God in a place originally prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).
3. It is a horrifying existence which the Bible graphically describes in various ways:
 - a. Six times in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus describes it as a place where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).
 - b. A place according to Mark’s gospel of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43), where “their worm does not die” (Mark 9:48).
 - c. A place where, according to John “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night” (Revelation 14:11).
4. To be a part of saving a person from such a death is the greatest thing you or I could do for another human being.

Slide 5

B. RESTORATION COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS

“let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way . . . will

cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20, NASB95)

1. To “cover” sins is to bring about the forgiveness of those sins.
2. When David repented of his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the death of her husband, Uriah, not to mention the attempted cover-up, God forgave him.
3. He wrote two psalms which spoke to that event: Psalms 32 & 51.
4. He began Psalm 32 with these words, “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!” (Psalm 32:1, NASB95).
5. When you and I first came to Christ, our “multitude of sins” were covered!
6. One of the greatest joys in life is to see someone turn “from the error of his way.”
7. God covers those sins and iniquities, and remembers them no more (Hebrews 10:17).

Slide 6

III. Our Ministry of Spiritual Restoration

A. LOVE

1. While it is God alone who covers those sins, you and I have a vital role to play in this process of restoration.
2. He uses human instruments, people like you and I who love Him and who love others, because . . .
 - a. Solomon said, “love covers all transgressions” (Proverbs 10:12).
 - b. Peter said, “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).
3. You and I must love our brother or sister who wanders from Christ instead of rejecting them.
4. Our love “covers a multitude of sins” not because not because it can atone for those sins, but because our love cares and seeks to maintain the relationship through which the grace of God is able to work.

5. Through our love, God reveals His own love for the straying individual and His desire to bring them back home.
6. Is there a wanderer in our midst to whom we have neglected to reach out? If so, let's correct that now!

Slide 7**B. AUTHENTICITY**

1. If we are to restore someone, we must possess what we wish them to have.
2. Listen to what the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians scattered throughout the region of Galatia, "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." (Galatians 6:1, NASB95)
3. Genuine concern is seen in our eyes and heard in the tone of our voices.
4. If we hope to restore those caught in sin, we, ourselves, must truly be spiritual people.

Slide 8**C. PRAYER**

1. Three verses earlier here in James's letter, he wrote, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB95).
2. There is effective power in believing prayer.
3. We must be a people who are continually carrying the names of those who have wandered away before our Father's throne.
4. Our prayers for them should be specific, regular and passionate.
5. Their souls are worth far more than this world's riches.

Slide 9**D. ADMONITION**

1. The last time the apostle Paul ever saw the faces of the elders from Ephesus, he reminded them, "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one

with tears.” (Acts 20:31, NASB95)

2. In regards to a disobedient Christian, Paul instructed the brethren in Thessalonica to “admonish him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:15).
3. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul spoke of a time when Peter was acting in a hypocritical way and his hypocrisy was leading many of the brethren in the church in Antioch away.
4. On that occasion, Paul confronted Peter with his sinful actions (Galatians 2:11-14).
5. There are times when we must prayerfully confront a brother or sister in love with the sin in their lives.

Conclusion

Slide 10

1. As you look around the auditorium this morning, is there a seat now empty where someone used to sit, but has wandered away from the truth?
2. Is this someone with whom you share a friendship? Will they listen to you?
3. If so, would you please go to them and seek to turn them back?
4. Ask God to work through you to save their soul from spiritual death.
5. The greatest joy you may ever know is that of seeing a brother or sister in Christ come home.
6. Are you a person who has never submitted your life to Jesus Christ in obedient faith?
7. Do you know how important it is to save your soul? To have your sins covered by the blood of Jesus Christ?
8. Will you come to Him today? It is the greatest thing you can ever do in your life!