

Small Group Discussion Questions

- Read James 5:19-20

Kid Questions

- What does it mean to wander?
- What might it look like if someone wandered away from the truth of God?

Adult Questions

- Consider the message on Sunday, this Quiet Time and James 5:19-20. Did any of those bring up any questions or emotions?
- What does James mean when he says, “save someone from death”?
- What does James mean when he says, “cover a multitude of sins”
- What do you think the difference between “covering a multitude of sins” and sweeping things under the rug is? (see also: 1 Pet. 4:8)
- According to this passage, whose responsibility is it to go after wandering brothers and sisters?
- Is it only one way, or does the sinner have a responsibility as well? (see also Matthew 5:23-24)
- What do you do if they don’t listen? (see also Matthew 18:15-17)

DAY ONE

Read James 5:19-20

In this passage, James is specifically talking to “brothers” meaning fellow followers of Christ. This is important because when he talks about “wandering”, it’s in the context of someone who claims to be a follower of Christ that is walking away from truth. While verse 20 provides some additional context for verse 19, for today’s Quiet Time, we’re going to focus specifically on verse 19.

Throughout this quiet time, we will take a look at a number of verses, some from books other than James, to explore what the Bible says about how to help a brother or sister in the faith that is “wandering from the truth” as well as our responsibility in the process.

REFLECT

- Are there some areas where you have been wandering?
- Do you know a brother or sister who has been wandering from the truth?

RESPOND

- If you have been wandering, take some time to repent to the Lord and, if necessary, go ask forgiveness of any people you have hurt.
- Take some time to pray for any wandering brothers or sisters in Christ.

Lord, reveal to me any areas where I have been wandering from your truth. Give me the wisdom to see what the enemy is up to in my life. Lord, I also pray for my wandering brothers and sisters. Will you give me a burden for them. Remind me to pray for them. Remind me to pursue them and draw them back to you. Amen

DAY TWO

Read James 5:19-20

Have you ever witnessed the power of repentance and restoration in the life of another person. It's AMAZING! Over the years, I have had many opportunities to function as a guide, coach, mentor, and mediator for those needing help. Those meetings can often be difficult, but they can also be amazing. The feeling that comes from watching someone truly apologize and repent of their actions and jump into restoration is overwhelming. How much greater must the Joy of the Lord be when His children turn from their sin and come running back to him?

For today's Quiet Time, we will be focusing on verse 20 of James chapter 5. James concludes his letter with an encouragement to go after the brothers and sisters that have wandered off and are living lives of sin. In verse 20, he says, "whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins". Sin ultimately leads to death, both physically and spiritually. (Romans 6:23) So when a brother or sister in Christ is caught in sin, they are headed towards death. It may not be immediate or just a physical death, but rather the death of heart and separation from relational intimacy with God. The Bible does give us assurance as believers of our salvation, even if we sin, but it also warns that true believers don't "practice sin"—meaning continue in it knowingly and unrepentantly. See (1 John 3:9-10) "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*" So James' message is that if brothers or sisters in Christ are "wandering", whether they are aware of it or not, we are to rescue them by pointing out the error of their ways. We will save them both from the consequences of sin but also any discipline from the Lord.

REFLECT

- Do you know any brothers or sisters in Christ who are wandering?

RESPOND

- In yesterday's Quiet Time we encouraged you to pray for the wanderer, today, we encourage you to actually pursue the wanderer and help guide them back.

Lord, give me the courage to love my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ well and to help guide them back to you. Protect us from wandering from your truth. Amen

DAY THREE

Read Galatians 6:1-2

The last two verses of James tell us to go after the “brothers and sisters that have wandered from the truth” but, James isn’t the only one to call us into action. Over the next few days, we will take some time to look at some other examples where scripture tells us to pursue others and in which contexts.

In the case of Galatians 6:1-2, we are told to “restore” our brother in Christ who is “caught in any transgression”. Consider the differences in the language used in these verses as opposed to James 5:19-20. Wandering implies an act of movement by the party, whether intentionally getting off track or unintentionally. However “caught” implies an act of the enemy. So in both cases, whether someone walks off on their own or they are snared by the enemy, we as believers are called to pursue them and “restore him in a spirit of gentleness”. We are also warned to “keep watch on yourself lest you to be tempted”. This warning makes sense in the context of being snared by a scheme of the enemy.

REFLECT

- Are you caught in any schemes of the enemy?
- How about those around you? Can you see any situations where the enemy “set them up”?

RESPOND

- What are some practical ways you can support and protect those around you? Take some time to act on those today. (Prayer, loving confrontation, warfare, inviting others into the story)

Lord, help us to be a community of people that love each other enough to speak up. Help us to be full of grace for our brothers and sisters as you are full of grace for us. Help us to be wise to the schemes of the enemy trying to catch us. Amen

DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 18:15

As we look at times when we need to help our brothers and sisters by gently and lovingly pointing out their sin, inevitably the question arises; “what if their sin was against me?” In today’s passage we will examine the answer to that question. We will continue in Matthew 18 in tomorrow’s Quiet Time by answering the question of what happens when they don’t respond to our confrontation.

In Matthew 18:15 we are told directly what to do when our brother sins against us— “go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.” This is important because it’s not what we commonly do in our culture. Is it? Often confrontation looks like email chains or angry Facebook posts with multiple people being tagged. The reality is, we don’t like confrontation. We fear that it might not go well and that we may lose a friendship. Unfortunately, by not following the wisdom and truth of Scripture, we make those fears a reality because the situation becomes much worse the more people we add.

REFLECT

- Think of a time when someone sinned against you. How did you respond to it?
- Did you talk to them? Did you do it alone or with others? How did they respond?

RESPOND

- Is there someone that God is leading you to go talk to about how they have hurt you?
- Is there someone you need to apologize to for gossiping about instead of just going and working it out.

Lord, help me to follow your Word even when I’m hurt. Give me your eyes and your heart for my fellow brother or sister in Christ. Help me to love them enough to point out their fault. Amen

DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 18:15-17

Yesterday we looked at Matthew 18 verse 15, which told us to go talk to fellow believers when they have sinned against us and point out their faults. In today's Quiet Time, we are going to look at a couple of the surrounding verses which help us understand what to do when we approach someone and they refuse to listen. Matthew 18:16 tells us directly, "if they do not listen, take one or two others along with you". The purpose isn't to team up and intimidate them into apologizing but rather to help the two of you look at the situation objectively. Often, our conflicts are formed by miscommunications rather than malicious intent. By bringing in a objective third party, it can create a safe environment to resolve the issues. This is the role of all believers as we have all been included in the "Ministry of Reconciliation" in Jesus Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

If he still refuses to listen, even with others there, "tell it to the church". Again, the heart of this isn't to publically humiliate but rather to say, "church, one of our fellow brothers is in trouble and need of help. They are caught in sin. Let's pray for them and encourage them to make things right."

Lastly, if they won't listen to the church "let him be as a Gentile and a tax collector". "Tax collector" had the same connotation as telling us "treat them like a "used car salesman" or door-to-door solicitor. Why would God tell us to do that and what does it mean? It means if someone is continuing in unrepentant sin, even after they've been confronted by multiple people who have pointed out the error of their ways and they yet they still rebelliously continue, they are a danger to the community and themselves. 1 John tells us that true believers cannot continue in unrepentant sin and rebellion because the Holy Spirit is grieved within them. (1 John 3:9-10) If that is the case, then the person who is continuing in sin should be treated as an unbeliever and someone who is hostile towards God. Consider this example: If you have a guest in your house that was swearing at everyone and threatening them, would you let them remain in the house if you had already asked them to stop multiple times and they didn't? In the same way, it is unwise to allow people to continue to participate in the community of believers when they are running around hurting people and refusing to stop.

REFLECT

- *Spend some time praying about and studying these verses on your own as they can be difficult to understand. Write down your questions and bring them to your homegroup to discuss.*

DAY SIX

Read Matthew 5:23-24

Matthew 5:23-24 “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

Over the last week, we have looked at multiple verses that discuss our responsibility as believers to confront those who are caught in sin, as well as those that have sinned against us. What about the person who has sinned though? What about the person who has sinned against us? Shouldn't they be the ones to begin the effort of reconciliation?

Well the answer to that question is both, “yes and no”. “Yes”, because Matthew tells us “you remember that your brother has something against you...go; first be reconciled to your brother”. That means if you have committed an offense to your brother or sister and you are aware of it, yes you are responsible to go work it out.

Additionally, “no” is also true because, the temptation is to wait for the offender to come talk to us, thus justifying us remaining unreconciled until they make it right. Based on the last few days of quiet time though, we know that is a wrong conclusion. It is the responsibility of BOTH parties to reconcile. God's heart is for us not to remain in offense or unforgiveness.

REFLECT

- Do you know of any brothers or sisters in Christ that have something against you?
- Have you made efforts to seek restoration?

RESPOND

- Based on what we've studied in this quiet time, evaluate your relationships and determine whether there is anyone you need to reconcile with or perhaps even invite others into helping with that reconciliation.