

June 1, 2014

Search & Rescue
James 5:19-20

All Stand and Read Scripture

James 5:19-20

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁹ My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,
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.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are concluding the book of James. James has provided for us “**Tests of Faith**”, so we can evaluate our Christian life and discover areas in our life that can be changed, strengthened, and make us more like Christ. In other words, these “tests of faith” can help us mature in our faith.

As we close out the book, I would like to review the tests of faith that James exhorts us with.

1. **The Trials Test.** When James tells us to “**Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials**”, it seems like an **oxymoron**. James tells us that God loves us so much that He will work in our life through a trial to bring us closer to Him and make us more like Christ. “**All things work together for good to those who love the Lord**”.
2. **The Word Test.** **Be doers of the Word and not hearers only.** We are to take the Word of God, apply it to our lives, and DO it.

ILLUSTRATION:

A bank teller works with currency all of the time. He is so familiar with it that when a counterfeit coin or bill shows up, he recognizes it immediately.

We should be that versed in the Word of God. If we spend hours reading, and studying the Bible and embedding it in our heart, we will recognize when someone is preaching or teaching the wrong message.

3. **The Partiality Test.** God views everyone the same. No one is more important due to power, prestige, or wealth. We are to treat everyone equally.

4. **The Works Test.** “Faith without works is dead”. When we truly have faith, we want to get involved. You say to yourself, “God has blessed me and changed my life; I don’t want to keep this to myself”.

ILLUSTRATION:

How cruel would it be if you found the cure to all cancer and you kept it to yourself? Now, that would be a fantastic discovery, wouldn’t it, to be able to cure all cancer?

But even that discovery is not as great as the gospel. God has given us the cure to spiritual cancer. Who are we to keep it to ourselves! It must be shared! We must get involved with building the kingdom of God using the gifts that God has given us.

5. **The Speech Test.** Our speech should reflect our faith. Our tongue is like a fire. “Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!” The power of our tongue is amazing! **Our speech should always reflect the principles of the Word of God.**
6. **The Wisdom Test.** There are a lot of intelligent people out there that do not agree with the Word of God. That means that they are not WISE! I have heard a lot of the creation verses evolution debate. Even though evolutionists see the fingerprints of design all throughout this planet and universe, they refuse to acknowledge the designer. They won’t allow God to be an answer to their inquiry. We should take the wisdom of God’s Word and apply it to our lives.
7. **The Friendship of the World Test.** We are to be in the world, but not of the world. We should be making contact with the world. The principle is “there is no **IMPACT** in others lives unless there is **CONTACT!**” We often stay within our own little world and do not interact with anyone outside of our community. This is a violation of the Word of God! We are called to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” by Jesus in the great commission. We should try to make a difference in the lives of others. We should be asking the Lord to direct us in our efforts to reach others. We will be in the world, but we will be different from the world. We have a different set of values. James encourages us **not** to be in love with the world, but in love with God. We are to make a difference in this world. The results last for an eternity.
8. **The Prayer Test.** We are to be seeking God and praying to Him. If there is a problem in our life, let us pray. Ask God to help us deepen our prayer life, because He has told us to pray.

I am sure you have seen the news when a “Search and Rescue” was being done to try to find a child who has gone missing. Many volunteers will fan out and comb through the woods and seek for the missing child.

When a lost child is found alive, we all rejoice because the **lost has been found and a life has been saved.** The life that is saved, as we know though, is just an extension of their life, because, unless Jesus returns first, we all die. We are mortal beings.

If we are willing to put that much effort into saving an earthly life, how much more effort should we be willing to exert to save a spiritual life? When we “**turn a sinner from the error of his way, it will save his soul from death**” **for eternity**.

Jesus said in:

Matthew 18:11

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹¹ [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

We are to be like Christ. If Jesus’ passion was to seek and save the lost, how much more should it be our passion? His search was not for people who are lost physically here on earth, but for the people who are lost spiritually.

The title to my message this morning is “**Search & Rescue**”. Let’s take a look at what James is trying to tell the Christian.

BODY:

Let’s read again the last two verses in this amazing letter from James.

James 5:19-20

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¹⁹ My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,
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.

Do you see how important this is? James has written all of these “tests of faith” and he says if someone has been coming to your church and he “does not get it” and walks away, what are we to do?

Are we just going to say, “Just let him go. It is their decision. We will let him go.” No, that is not the heart of God! God’s heart is “if anyone among you strays from the truth, we should turn him back”.

When I hear the words “among you”, I wonder, could it be me? This brings up the first principle.

I. Stay on Track Yourself Morally and Doctrinally

Make sure you are on track.

ILLUSTRATION:

When we lived in the Indianapolis area, the land was virtually flat. The roads were pretty straight and went basically East, West, North, and South. It was generally pretty easy to start in one direction and know that you could keep following the road and it would keep going in that direction. In north Missouri, you may start out going south and end up going north. The country roads typically follow the ridges. So unless you know the area, you can get lost.

There is one thing that can help us to find our way in North Missouri. It is called a: GPS. "Make a right at the next turn". "You idiot, you missed your turn, turn around! The GPS! **Powerful!** It locates where you are and locates where you want to go, and suggests the best path to get there.

Where are you at today? Where is your heart today?

Where do you want to go? There should be no question; I want to be like Him.

How do you get there? This is a self-evaluation that you need to make based upon God's Word.

- How can I be a better Husband?
- How can I be more like Jesus in my life?
- How can I strengthen my wife and my family?

If we seek those things, He will do that!

James says, "If anyone among you". That could be **me!**

Galatians 6:1-3

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

6 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, let him stay there, don't bother him, leave that person alone. Is that what it says? No! you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; I like that. Not of an attitude that I am better than you, but that we miss you and want you to come back. **each one looking to yourself,** if we are on a search and rescue mission, we must be careful to not get lost ourself. **so that you too will not be tempted.**
² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

The last two verses in James is talking about someone who has decided not to follow Christ anymore. He has strayed away from the church. We must approach them in gentleness.

The challenge for us today is to make sure that

- WE are not wandering off
- that we are staying true to the Word of God
- that we are doing what God wants us to do
- we go home and read God's Word to ensure that what we teach is true

II. Search Out and Rescue Those Who Stray

If any among you strays from the truth someone turns him back

Who is that someone?

If you know someone who has been coming to church for a while and they are getting into something they should not be getting in to, and they have wandered away, then you in love, you humbly, you gently talk to them. If you have a relation with that person, then you are the person God is calling to make a difference in their life.

Wait a minute! Isn't that what we are hiring the minister to do? If you have a relationship with that person, you will credibility with that person that I may not have. Just to say:

- I missed you at church.
- What has happened?
- Let us answer those questions for you.
- If one of your relationships is pulling you away from God, you need to get away from that relationship. It is not worth it.

That is the type of ministry that all of us should have. If you know someone who is falling away from the truth, you should reach out in love and seek to bring them back.

It is a call for action. We are to get involved. It is that whole "Faith without works is dead".

"Yeah, I noticed that he has not come to church in a while. I hope that somebody calls him." You be the one to call.

It breaks my heart when someone falls through the cracks in the church. We don't want it to happen. We must have a passion for the lost. It seems that it is very easy for something like this to happen, but it should be very hard for something like this to happen, if the church has a passion for them.

Notice that the scriptures says "**strays**" away. This is a slow **drifting** away. It is not too often that someone just immediately leaves the church. It usually occurs when someone misses a week or two and then just loses the desire to return. What you do see is a drifting away. Little decisions here and there that pulls the person away from the church.

ILLUSTRATION:

If you were in a room with bright lights and they were dimmed very slowly, you would not notice the light fading away. After a couple of hours though, all of a sudden you find yourself sitting in darkness.

That's how it happens in many people's lives. They begin to drift away. It should be a call of action to us to get them back.

III. Celebrate the Eternal Blessings of Doing Rescue Work

James 5:20

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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.

Matthew 18:12-14

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹² “What 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? ¹³ If 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. ¹⁴ So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

The heart of God is “he leaves the ninety-nine” to find the one lost sheep. Jesus said “**I came to seek and save those who are lost**”. It was a passion of Jesus. He made a beeline to those who were lost. Jesus said, “**It is not the healthy that needs the doctor, it is the sick**”.

I am so thankful that God has a heart for lost people, like I was, and like you were.

If we are followers of Jesus Christ, if we want to be like Him, we need to take the last two verses of James and make them come alive in our lives. Lord, we want to develop a passion for those who are lost!

The bottom line is that we strive to become more like Christ. If Christ had a passion for the lost, then I want to have that same passion.

It should be our prayer here at Greenwood Christian Church that we should always have a passion for the lost. We should realize that there is an **eternal** blessing that comes from that.

When you are a part of a work that makes a difference in a person’s life spiritually; if they come to a faith in Christ because of works that you are involved in, you are planting the seed, and you have changed that person’s **eternity**. That is the blessing!

May Greenwood Christian Church always have a passion for the lost; that we can celebrate the blessings of doing rescue work; that there are always people here, behind the scenes, who are doing the work of Christ and reaching out to people who are lost.

God wants all of us to be a light that shines, wherever we are.

Here is a challenge for you. May you never lose the passion of being a witness for Christ. Have a heart for someone who has walked away. If someone has walked away from the faith, maybe it's time to say, "I haven't seen you in a while. How are you doing? You ought to come back. You know what, that is a struggle that God's Word has the answer for".

CONCLUSION:

Three challenges for you:

1. Be available. Don't be judgmental. Get the facts.
2. Pray.
3. Be a person whose faith works.

How hard it is for us to get away from earthly things and put our mind and attention on spiritual things. We all know which is more important. Finding a child who is lost in the timber is great, but we all KNOW that saving a sinner for eternity is much more important.

So where lays the problem? Are we so wrapped up in ourselves trying to keep our lives clean, that we have forgotten that our faith should produce works?

If you have not put your faith and trust in Christ, DO IT TODAY!

We are told in Eph. 3:9 that God is **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, the window of opportunity is open for you now. God wants to come into your life. Won't you come forward this morning and let God know that you are ready to turn your life around for Him and start living your life for Him?

Your destiny is determined by how you live. Will it be for you or by serving God?

If you have wandered away from the Lord and the Holy Spirit is convicting you this morning to come back home, this invitation is open to you to rededicate your life to Christ by stepping forward.

We are also here with open arms, if you would like to identify yourself as part of this family of God in the Greenwood Christian church.

The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.