

## What to Do with Wanderers

*James 5:19-20*

In the old Christian hymn, we sing, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; Prone to leave the God I love.” The hymn resonates with us because it taps into a truth we feel deep in our soul. We are prone to wander from God! James understands this reality and as he comes to the end of his letter, he addresses the issue. What to do with wanderers. His answer isn’t long or exhaustive, but he gives us a few words of wisdom. Let’s learn from that wisdom!

### Read James 5:19-20

1. What does it mean for a believer to “stray from the truth” (v. 19)?
2. How does it happen that a believer who at one time was fully following Jesus, gets to a place of wandering from the truth? Thoughts? What have you seen?
3. Since any of us could be the one who strays from the truth, what can we do personally to prevent ourselves from heading down a path of straying from the truth?

Sam said:

There’s something really interesting about the way James introduces this idea of bringing someone back home from their wanderings: he does not command that this is something Christians do. He ASSUMES that a believing community will go after [and] help lead their brother or sister in Christ back to the truth. This is work James expects of the church he is writing to, and it’s work that our God expects of our church, too.

4. Why do you think James assumes rather than commands that we do this work of helping one who is straying from the truth come back to God?
5. Practically, what might it look like to help turn someone back to the truth?

6. In his sermon, Sam stated that verse 20 is a “difficult sentence to unpack . . . there are scholars who . . . disagree on just exactly what James is trying to say here.” What is your best understanding of what James is saying?

Sam said:

If we're going to commit to the work of bringing wayward believers and lost folks back to faith in Christ and a right relationship with God, we need to keep in mind that when God does this sort of thing He goes after people with an abundance of GRACE -- NOT with an eagerness to come down on them heavy and hard for being wrong. . . That's not how he treats us when we sin and wander off. It's not how we should treat others. If you're going to be on the rescue team, you have to be able to let grace and love lead the way. It does no good to try and bludgeon someone back to obedience. In Galatians 6:1 Paul counsels those seeking to restore their wandering brothers and sisters, *“if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person GENTLY.”*

7. Why do you think grace and love and gentleness are so important in trying to bring a wanderer back to a right relationship with God?
8. What is the main thing that you think God is saying to you through this passage?

### **Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted**

---



**Prayer:** Spend some time in serious and honest reflection about whether or not you've wandered off from the truth in any capacity.