

SPECIAL SERMON:

"Search and Rescue: A Ministry of Anyone to Anyone"

INTRODUCTION

- **James 5:19-20** is about Christian ministry to other Christians.
 - Our culture is more powerful than ever at causing believers to make destructive choices.
 - The book of James was written to demonstrate **how genuine faith works** (James 2:20-26).
- **Main Idea: Genuine faith at work involves search and rescue.**

THE RELEVANCE OF SEARCH AND RESCUE: OBVIOUS (JAMES 5:19)

- **My brethren (v.19)**: Used 15 times in the epistle of James; refers to those in the circle group of professing and possessing believers.
- **strays (v.19)**: means to "wander off, go out of orbit, go off like a planet out of its path."
 - The word is in the passive tense which means that the person is being acted on. They are being influenced or led astray by another. Someone is telling them things that are not biblically true.
- **sinner (v.20)** – means to "miss the mark": Not doing what God requires and doing things that God forbids.

Ways that a Christian can be led astray:

1. The **culture** can influence the Christian to go astray (e.g. only 1/3 today believe lying is wrong).
2. **False teachers** can influence the Christian to go astray (2 Peter 2:1, 1 Timothy 4:1).
3. Even **saved friends and family** who ignore or rationalize the truth can lead the Christian astray ("your happiness is more important than your holiness").

- **any one (v.19)**: an indefinite pronoun. This could happen to anybody - unrestricted regardless of age, maturity or position.
- **among you (v.19)** – in proximity to you, in your sphere of influence.
- **turns him back (v.19)** – intensive word which means that you get them back on the path.

THE REWARD OF SEARCH AND RESCUE: PRICELESS (JAMES 5:20)

- **let him know (v.20)** – The verb stresses having a conviction that drives your decision making and affects your life.

"Everybody doesn't want to be rescued. The more insane I am in my sin, the harder I am to reach."

- **save his soul from death (v.20)** – it will happen. Not "it might be that you will save them."
- **Save (sozo)** – not salvation in this context but the present tense realities of what happens when you fall into sin (e.g. Psalm 38).

THE REQUIREMENT OF SEARCH AND RESCUE: RELENTLESS (JAMES 5:20)

- **Application: You may be all that they have.**
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – calls for relational ministry to the weak and to those who are prone to wander.
- **Rescue requires patience: not a one-time deal.** (1 Thessalonians 5:14 – "be patient with all").

Sermon Application Questions

September 22, 2019

PERSONAL RESPONSES

Pastor Harry told the story of when he was 15 years old and saved a little girl from drowning. His description of this event was: “we were bonded for life. . . it was beyond words meaningful.”

- 1 What did you think of this story? How did the story illustrate the importance of **spiritual life-saving**? Why do you think that James ends his epistle on the subject of “search and rescue?”

Pastor Harry described the church at an “at-risk population” for straying from the truth. Not only is **the culture** more powerful than ever at causing believers to go astray, **false teachers** secretly introduce heresies in the church and even **saved friends and family** can ignore or rationalize the truth.

- 2 Which of these influences do you think are the most dangerous for the church today? How can we as a church guard ourselves against these influences and stay committed to the truth?

DIGGING DEEPER

- 1 Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week’s sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

James 2:17-20

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

2 Peter 2:1-2

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Matthew 18:10-14

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Read Psalm 38:1-22. In your own words, explain the consequences that even a believer can experience if that person is living in sin.

2 Take care to note both the **physical** and **spiritual** consequences that David experienced because of sin.

How does this passage illustrate the truth that “living in sin is spiritual insanity”?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Pastor Harry asked us a simple question in his sermon: do you have anyone in your life who needs spiritual search and rescue? How will you respond to that question this week?

Note the following encouragements as you engage in this ministry:

- Don't let feelings of inadequacy keep you from “search and rescue”: **Remember: you may be all that they have.**
- Commit to examining your own life first, then going to minister to others (Matthew 7:3-5, Galatians 6:1-2). Don't try to rescue someone living in sin if you are yourself are living in sin!
- Realize that pastors and elders have oversight of the flock yet the ministry of search and rescue is **the responsibility of every member of the church.** The church should be a community of spiritual life-guards!
- Pastor Harry taught us that there are levels of force that can be used in search and rescue ministry. Lowest level: “a nudge” – “do you think you should you be listening to that?” Highest level: full blown intervention. Don't use a sledgehammer to kill a fly.
- Remember that the tone of relational ministry is “gentleness.” Read 2 Timothy 2:24-26.
- Give a sinning believer time to repent. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – “be patient with all”. The ministry of search and rescue is not a one-time deal. Bathe this ministry with prayer and give it time.
- Remember that sin is “spiritual insanity”. A sinning believer may not want rescuing. Don't be surprised if a believer who this ministry sins against you when you are trying to reach out to them.
- According to Matthew 18:10-14, there is heavenly value in rescuing one sheep. **If you can reach just one, then your ministry has eternal value.**

The hymnwriter wrote, *“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord. Take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above.”*

2 James 5:19-20 teaches us that “any one” in the church – regardless of age, maturity, or position – is prone to wander off and be led astray. The safeguard for this danger is to be committed to “intentional and sanctifying relationships in the local church.”

How will you express your commitment to Christian community this week?