



SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Scripture: James 5:19-20

TITLE: Are All Who Wander Lost?

Not all who wander are lost. Have you ever heard that before? It's a popular t-shirt and bumper sticker slogan. But is it true? Well, sure, not all who wander are lost. But what about the majority? Are they lost? If so, lost where? What is our role in helping them?

James has the answer for us today in James 5:19-20.

My brothers and sisters, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, let that person know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

James wraps up his letter to these dispersed and persecuted Christians with a sobering directive. He says, “brothers and sisters” —in other words, friends or family—“listen up. This is important. If any among you strays from the truth...” Who are these potential people? What does stray mean? What is the truth?

The people are nonbelievers or notional Christians who are part of the crowd but are finally wandering away from Christ and the church. There are many people today who have been raised in the faith, attended church, identify as Christian but do not have saving faith. It's identity by association, tradition, or intellectual assent. But over time, that lack of saving faith draws them away from the truth. What's the truth? It's the Gospel. It is the soul-saving message.

If we know of their departure, it should be our loving and caring response to go after them. It does not say give them false assurance or drag them back. It says, “*someone turns them back.*” We have no saving power. All we can do is influence them through our lives and sharing the Gospel. We can share the hope of God through sharing His Word.

But you may be wondering, “how I can be sure that these people aren't just wayward Christians?” James calls them sinners and says when we are able to bring them back, their soul is saved, and their sins are covered. These are nonbelievers who were part of the fold who display their disbelief by walking away.

Our job is to share the Gospel, and as 1 Corinthians 3:7 says, “*So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*” Romans 1:16 says, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.*”

So here's my challenge for you today: go deliver the Gospel of truth. There are many false converts today. James has said that faith without works is dead. Jesus said you shall know the

false teachers by their fruit. And once someone walks from the faith, we have the privilege to deliver the Good News. Remember, we don't save anyone. We simply get to be Christ's ambassadors by sharing God's powerful word. So do so today.

When we lovingly pursue those who wander, we will win the day.