

SEEK THE STRAYING.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins..

Elements of seeking the straying:

- We are not **immune** from **wandering**: Most of us will wander at some point in heart if not in action – “*If anyone among you wanders from the truth...*” – 5:19a
 - Our hearts are prone to wander.
 - Wandering is common and easy to do but bringing someone back is hard work.

Q: What does it mean to wander?

A: 1) To proceed without a sense of proper direction, go astray, wander about aimlessly. 2) To be deluded, be mistaken in one’s judgment, deceive oneself. 3) To be deceived (by another), be misled.

Q: How can we wander?

A: Most often it is a slow fade rather than committing some cataclysmic sin.

The danger of straying:

- Danger to themselves: tragedy of a wasted life.
- Danger to new believers: cause of stumbling.
- Danger to mature believers: cause of energy-drain with little time or energy for evangelism and missions.
- Danger to unbelievers: cause of contempt for the Gospel.

- We are not **exempt** from **rescuing** – 5:19b “*and someone brings him back,*”

The same pronoun for ‘*anyone*’ wandering is used for ‘*whoever*’ brings them back to the truth. Any believer can wander and any believer can rescue.

Q: What does it mean to bring someone back?

A: To cause a person to change belief or course of conduct, with focus on the thing to which one turns: Intentional restoration to the truth of the Gospel.

- We are **assured** of the incredible **impact** of rescuing – 5:20 *let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

Q: Who is saved? The one who returns or the one who convinces the straying one to return?

A: Primarily the one who returns to the truth because our works do not save us. However, there is *incredible* joy for the stray-seekers.

Douglas J. Moo “The blessing given to the faithful believer must not, of course, be construed as a reward for his efforts. But the idea that God will treat us as we have treated others is inescapable in Scripture (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:23-25) and explicitly mentioned by James (2:12-13).”¹

Prerequisites for Seeking the Straying:

1. Commitment to the **restorative** power of the Gospel and the glory of God.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.

Warren Wiersbe, “Sin is out to catch and kill (James 1:13–15), but we ought to be out to catch and make alive.”

2. **Genuine** love for people.

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Jude 23

“save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”

¹ Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 250.

