

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

Gospel of James - Conclusion

October 18, 2020



James concludes his letter with a goal for us to be mindful of people who have wandered. Specifically, James is speaking of Christians who have wandered away from the truth and he has challenged us to help bring them back. Maybe these Christians were not spiritually mature, since that's the language James writes about, this would make sense. Maybe these Christians were not ever believers, but were just a part of our community. Either way, they have wandered away from the truth of Jesus Christ.

Although James doesn't explicitly explain how to help get these wanderers back, we can agree that we do need to try and get these people back. Thankfully, the bible has some teachings we can learn from. The story of the Prodigal Son is the most famous illustration. James has also encouraged prayer for one another as well as focusing on the practical needs we all have. In any case, the father of the son who wandered away in Luke 15, loved his son greatly and welcomed him back with joy and happiness. What a great example for us!

Sometimes it may be you or I that has wandered away. The question I have is, how long did it take for the son to realize that he's living worse than his father's slaves and he should come back home, even if his actions had consequences that he'll need to live with? We should be encouraged to come home if we find ourselves wandering away to a joyous and merciful community and God.

For me, it's all about God's heart. Even though the scriptures are full of examples and the definition of God's heart, we often times get it wrong. It's so easy for us to see God as the ultimate judge and although He is that, He is so much more. He is merciful and loving and desires to be with you and I! For me, Jesus' parable about a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep to go after the 1 that has wandered away is the ultimate example of God's heart for us and what we ought to do for those whom we love.

Weekly Actions:

1. Who do you know that has wandered away from the truth? Have they wandered away because they are not mature in Christ, or have they wandered because they were only part of the community? What can you do to try and get them back? Remember the shepherd who leaves the 99 to go after the 1 sheep that has wandered.
2. How will you respond to the homecoming of the one who has wandered? Will you find yourself full of joy and happiness? Will you celebrate the way the shepherd did when he found his lost sheep or the way the father did when his son returned home after wasting his inheritance? This is a good heart-check and it's an opportunity to allow yourself to be filled with the Spirit of God, who is love. - Joe Pattee