

## Restoration

VBC

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Series: *Now to Live the Life* #13

James 5:19-20

### “Finding Life on the Other Side of Death”

#### INTRO

Sometime ago, this ad was found in a paper.

“Son, I know you are in this city. Please call dad collect. I love you”  
(home and work numbers included)

Somewhere – maybe at 16, 18 years later -- estrangement replaced love,  
alienation replaced friendship -- a relationship forged around reading books,  
flying kites was lost

What all too easily happens within natural families, happens also in spiritual families

- We leave the God we loved

This week I spoke with a father whose son is now in university—and has turned away from God

I've thought a lot about his son this week - especially in light of the text before us

- In the book of James, God talks about leaving Him

How does it happen?

Are the consequences significant?

Do we have any responsibility?

- What does God tell us? (read James 5:19a)

#### **1 - ALL OF US ARE VULNERABLE TO SPIRITUAL DRIFT**

- The “among you” is a reference to those in the community of faith—not those out there, but us here

- The “if” suggests the possibility

- How does this happen?
  - James tells us in part with the verb, “wander”
    - If one should wander – lit. “be led astray” - be enticed, lured off course
  - The verb is passive in construction — meaning this — that while we carry responsibility for our choices, someone else is the predominant subject
    - And Scripture identifies *who* — It is the world, the flesh, the devil
      - 3 terrorist groups who are allied in their mission – To lead us astray
      - It is a life-long assault — They are...
        - Determined to -- move us to deny God the pleasure of seeing His glory reflected in us
        - Committed to -- denying us the privilege of experiencing the abundant life
        - Aimed at -- robbing us of the joy of fellowship with the King
        - Intent on -- keeping us from fulfilling God’s purposes for our lives
  - Each work to get us off course — get us lost — disengaged from TRUTH
    - Getting us instead, to believe ...
      - ...that being the lord of our own lives is better than allowing God to be
      - ...that the addictions of alcohol, or drugs, or pornography — or choices that lead to unfaithfulness can bring the better pleasure
      - ...that God’s commands cramp our style — that God’s will is to confine us
  - It’s the way sin works of course
    - To do its worst, sin must look its best.
    - It must disguise itself — put on lots of make-up in order to lead us astray
    - Move us down a path not measured in miles, but in affections
- Scripture underscores it happens to the best — Adam to David to Solomon to Jonah to Peter
  - The reality is — most everyone in Scripture has succumbed to drifts
  - Most of us have broken world experiences

- But we must be vigilant --

## **2 - SPIRITUAL DRIFT HAS ITS PRICE – v.5:20**

### **A- Deception leads to sin—and sin leads to death**

- A person begins to drift away from God - begins to make wrong choices
- And a deadening, a despoiling occurs
- Created out of nothing, we corrupt ourselves back into nothing

Reminds me of a high school kid I disciplined who was determined to follow Christ, but caved in and became a shell of the person he was

### **B- This is the nature of sin —**

- The irony is — it promises life — but behind every sinful act is some form of death
  - A deadening of joy, a severing of a relationship, a deterioration of credibility, a breaking down of reputation
  - The heart — once so vibrant — begins to atrophy
  - Dreams once held on to begin to wilt, possessions once hard earned and enjoyed are given up
- No wonder -- Rom 6:23 - the wages of sin is death

### **C- James underscores this in 1:15**

- Sin, when it is full grown, (for it does multiply—keeps branching like a polluted river into tributaries) eventually gives birth to death

- But here's the main point of the text —

## **3 - SPIRITUAL DRIFT CAN ONLY BE TURNED BACK BY A COMMUNITY OF GRACE**

### **A- If there is to be turning around of a life—it will require the healing ministry of another**

- Someone committed to the ministry of restoration - 5:20
- This someone has to be the community of grace

### **B- But this is not a given**

- Instead, we often “retreat, reprove, or refer” - Crabb

- 1 - We establish a safe distance between us and those who are troubled** – All too many churches are composed of religious people who keep a polite distance from one another
  - An army that meets for briefings — but never breaks into platoons to check in with one another

- 2 - Or we scold people into holier living**—apart from the hard work of involvement

- For we've never really understood grace

**3 - Worse — we easily write off, ignore, ostracize, treat as damaged goods**

**C- Truth is — we're not great at treating wounded soldiers**

- Someone has said — “The church is the only army that has the reputation for deserting its wounded”

*WHEN IS THE LAST TIME WE MADE A RESCUE EFFORT?*

- Yet, God's Word (here and other places) calls for just the opposite
  - Gal 6:1 – “Brothers and sisters, if a person is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual must restore — looking to yourself lest you too be tempted”
  - 2 Cor 5:8 - God has given to each of us the ministry of reconciliation
    - The ministry of bringing together what has been separated, picking up the pieces of what has been broken, binding the wounds of those who have been injured

**D- WHAT'S INVOLVED?**

**1 - A HEART OF COMPASSION — that cares enough to CONNECT**

- Without this, it will go no further

**2 - A WILLINGNESS TO RISK**

- Like Nathan – who risked his life to warn David of his ways
- Barnabas – who risked his relationship with Paul to restore an erring Mark back to kingdom usefulness

**3 - A RESOLVE TO ENTER THE BATTLE for their souls — To join**

God's persistence

- A determination to pray
- To reckon with the fact broken places can become strongholds — sin can give the enemy a certain claim
- It will not be easy

**4- A VISION of what the person could become - envision what the Spirit long ago planned for this person's life**

- A will to restore, rebuild
  - Like Jesus—who reached out to restore Peter—when everyone else left him
  - Like God—who gave Jonah a second chance

## **E- WHAT'S THE POTENTIAL RESULT?**

- When repentance and grace are retrieved as prominent activities of the church...
- When in the midst of spiritual war and its casualties, godly medics arise to apply the healing and restorative medicines of grace...something significant happens

### **1 - People get BACK ON COURSE**

- A way downward is turned back - v20a

### **2 - DEATH IS CONQUERED -- life is restored**

- A soul is saved from death - v20b
- A broken world is rebuilt

### **3 - Sin in all of its "growth" has been FORGIVEN - v20c**

- Covered, hidden, forgotten -- CANCELED
- There has been a restoration to spiritual wholeness

### **4 - GOD'S WILL IS ACCOMPLISHED**

- For this is at the heart of God's passion
- Why Jesus came to earth
- That people come home — that grace wins the day
- For where sin abounds, God's grace super-abounds

## **CONCLUSION**

One of my favorite movies this year - *Seabiscuit*

- It's a film populated by broken people —lost families, lost futures
- Broken horses—given up as no longer useable—given up as untrainable

But here's the powerful point of the film — Healing happened

- And it happened as a result of the community of the broken
- Something that could have never happened on one's own part

- Such is true of the church