



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

June 26, 2005
James 5:19-20

OVERVIEW

And so, we come to the end of the epistle of James. What kinds of themes has he touched on? Persecution and suffering, faith and prayer, holy and practical living, "stuff," and trusting in God. James has also helped us see that we are not supposed to "do" this Christian life on our own. (For example, see 2:1-9 or 2:14-16.) And, here at the close of his letter, he has one final word for us . . . about how we love each other.

DISCUSSION

Although the opening illustration might seem a little dramatic, hopefully it will generate the appropriate discussion. Try and deal with it realistically; encourage people to share their concerns with stepping into a place of responsibility, particularly when life is on the line. Wrestling with that idea will help us understand what James is calling us all to do.

When you turn to James 5:19-20, you only have a few phrases to concentrate on. Try not to read too much into these words; but don't overlook what James is telling us. Seeing as we *are* to be a community of faith, we do have responsibility for one another. No Christian should end up having to struggle with sin on his or her own; we should "be there" for one another. And if someone is straying, in love we should go after them!

Given the way James has been writing, it is most likely that the idea of "saving a soul" here is more about preserving the *kind of life* we are to be enjoying as Christians and not "getting someone saved." (Notice, for example, 1:15, 21; 4:4-10.) James has been talking with us about how to live out our faith in this world. (Recall our discussions on Sunday mornings that he is concentrating on how your faith works in this world and not, primarily, how your faith gets you to heaven.) That is the focus of his concerns here; how we are to live out faith in relationship with one another.

James 5:16 seems to be picking up the same idea (and, hence, is part of the "flow" that leads him to his remarks in 5:19-20). We are supposed to be caring for one another, praying for one another, and as need arises being a "minister of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-19) for one another. That means we can't just sit by the side of the pool when we see another brother or sister in Christ floundering in life because of sin. Even though it might be a frightening thought, faith and love should move us to dive right in and allow the Lord to use us to "save a soul . . . and cover a multitude of sins."

BIG IDEA

If we aren't looking out to help "rescue" one another, someone's going to go under!



DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

June 26, 2005
James 5:19-20

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

Imagine you are at your neighborhood pool. The place is pretty busy. Children are playing happily as the lifeguard tries to keep an eye on everyone. And then you notice; someone seems to be struggling in the far end of the pool. What would you do?

Sometimes when confronted with a need, we look to find someone who is "responsible" for taking care of that need. However, sometimes when the need is great enough, even if we are reluctant we might dive in (no pun intended!) to be of help. That should be kept in mind as we look at James' closing words. Read James 5:19-20.

In the context of James, when he speaks of "saving a soul" he is not talking (primarily) about "getting someone saved." He is talking about living out this life that is ours in Jesus in fullness. What does James say will hinder us experiencing fully the life that is ours?

What are we supposed to do for one another to help one another fully enjoy this life that is ours?

Turn back to 5:16. How does what James say there relate to what he writes in 5:19-20?

Try and come up with a "mission statement" for a follower of Jesus with regard to other Christians who are struggling with some issue of sin. What would James say our "call" is to be?

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