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**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Take some time to build relationships with the students:

* Ask for each student’s high and low from the week.
* Today’s RBQ (Relationship Building Question): What’s the most chaotic moment you’ve had trying to find something you really needed—right before school, practice, or leaving the house?

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever had a favorite show, band, or hobby that completely took over your life for a while… and then just faded? Maybe it was a Netflix series you binged in one weekend, or a sport you trained for non-stop—only to drop it a year later. We all lose interest sometimes. But faith isn’t supposed to be a “phase.” Still, if we’re honest, it can feel like one. Sometimes people we know—maybe even us—start strong, get involved, seem close to God… and then just quietly drift away. It’s not usually dramatic. It’s subtle. One skipped prayer turns into a week of silence. One hurt feeling turns into isolation. One doubt never shared turns into a new identity. And when that happens, it’s easy to think, “That’s their problem.” But James tells us something different. He says if someone wanders from the truth, it’s our job to help bring them back. That might feel intimidating, awkward, or even hopeless—but Scripture reminds us that God is in the business of search and rescue. Today, we’ll talk about what it means to stay grounded in our own faith and also how to help others who are drifting. It’s not about chasing people with guilt—it’s about loving like Jesus does.

***READ JAMES 5:19-20***

1. **James uses the word “wander.” What kind of image does that bring to your mind? What does it tell us about how people drift from faith?**
2. **Why do you think it’s so easy to drift without realizing it? Have you ever felt yourself slipping like that?**
3. **What do you think it looks like to “bring someone back”? How can we do that in a way that feels loving, not judgmental?**

***READ HEBREWS 2:1-4***

1. **Hebrews talks about “neglecting such a great salvation.” What do you think it looks like to neglect your faith—not walk away angrily, but just stop paying attention to it? Why is that dangerous?**

***READ LUKE 15:1-7***

1. **What stands out to you most in how the shepherd responds when he realizes one sheep is missing? What does that teach us about God’s heart?**
2. **In Luke 15, the shepherd goes after the one lost sheep. But in real life, we don’t always do that. Why do you think we sometimes act like it’s not our responsibility when someone walks away from their faith? What would it look like to care the way Jesus does?**

**WRAP UP**

Jesus doesn’t give up on people who drift—He goes after them. And He asks us to care like He does.

Who’s someone you know that might feel far from God right now? What’s one way you could reach out this week—not to pressure them, but just to remind them they’re not alone?

And if that person feels like you—if you’ve felt distant or disconnected—just know you’re not too far gone. Jesus still pursues you with love, not shame. You don’t have to have it all together to come back.

Ask for prayer requests, and pray together—for anyone who’s struggling or has wandered, and for God to give you His heart and courage to love people like He does.

**EXTENDED CUT**

James closes his letter not with a summary or a benediction, but with a challenge. It’s a call to action—not just to live wisely, but to pursue others who have drifted away. This short but powerful ending in James 5:19–20 reminds us that real faith doesn’t just protect itself—it looks out for others. If someone is wandering, we don’t stand by. We go after them.

The Greek word James uses for “wander” means “to proceed without a sense of proper direction.” It implies confusion or distraction—not always rebellion. This is key for students to understand. Wandering doesn’t usually look like slamming a door and shouting “I’m done with God.” It’s usually a slow fade—one missed prayer, one season of isolation, one question they were afraid to ask. James makes it clear: when someone wanders, we’re not called to shame them or write them off. We’re called to bring them back.

Hebrews 2:1–4 builds on this by warning against neglecting our salvation—not rejecting it, but forgetting it. Neglect can be passive. It happens when students let other things become louder than the voice of God. It’s a reminder that drifting doesn’t always feel dramatic until it’s too late.

Then in Luke 15, Jesus gives us a picture of how God responds to the lost. Through three parables—a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son—He shows us what relentless love looks like. In every story, something of value is missing, and the response is immediate, intentional, and joyful when it's found. The parable of the lost sheep in verses 1–7 makes it especially clear: God notices when even one person walks away, and He doesn't wait—He goes after them. That’s what Jesus does. And if we follow Him, we’re called to love like that.

**1. James uses the word “wander.” What kind of image does that bring to your mind? What does it tell us about how people drift from faith?**

“Wandering” makes it sound like it’s not always intentional—it’s slow, and it happens when we’re not paying attention. It shows how someone can stop showing up to church, stop praying, or stop caring about what God says without ever saying, “I’m done.” They just drift. It’s not usually about one big decision—it’s more like a slow fade.

**2. Why do you think it’s so easy to drift without realizing it? Have you ever felt yourself slipping like that?**

Life gets busy, or we feel hurt, or we just stop prioritizing God without meaning to. It’s like when you stop talking to a friend—not because you’re mad, but because you just stop reaching out. Then one day, you realize it’s been months. The same thing can happen in our relationship with God when we don’t stay connected**.**

**3. What do you think it looks like to “bring someone back”? How can we do that in a way that feels loving, not judgmental?**

It might be as simple as sending a message or inviting someone to hang out or come back to youth group. It's not about pressuring them—it’s about caring enough to check in. A lot of people who drift feel like no one notices. So just showing up with kindness can remind them they’re not forgotten—and neither is their faith.

**4. Hebrews talks about “neglecting such a great salvation.” What do you think it looks like to neglect your faith—not walk away angrily, but just stop paying attention to it? Why is that dangerous?**

Neglecting faith doesn’t always look like rebellion—it’s more like forgetting. It’s when we stop making time for God or stop caring about what He says, not because we hate Him, but because we get distracted or lazy. The danger is that our hearts start to grow cold, and we stop seeing how much we need Him. Over time, that can lead to bigger doubts, bad decisions, or just feeling like we’re alone. But the truth is, we’re never alone—God’s always ready to meet us when we turn back to Him.

**5. What stands out to you most in how the shepherd responds when he realizes one sheep is missing? What does that teach us about God’s heart?**

The shepherd doesn’t wait around or just hope the sheep wanders back—he goes after it. That kind of pursuit shows how personal God’s love is. Jesus calls Himself the “Good Shepherd” in John 10 because He’s not just watching over a crowd—He knows each one of us by name. He’s the kind of shepherd who would leave the 99 to find the one. That means even when we feel like we’ve messed up too badly or drifted too far, Jesus still wants us back. His love doesn’t give up, and He’s willing to carry us home when we can’t get there ourselves. That’s the heart of God—compassionate, patient, and never too busy for the one who’s lost.

**6.** **In Luke 15, the shepherd goes after the one lost sheep. But in real life, we don’t always do that. Why do you think we sometimes act like it’s not our responsibility when someone walks**

**away from their faith? What would it look like to care the way Jesus does?**

It’s easy to think someone else will step in or that it’s not really our place. We don’t want to make things awkward or seem like we’re judging them, so we stay quiet. But Jesus didn’t wait for people to come back on their own—He went after them. Caring the way He does means noticing when someone’s drifting and reaching out with love, not guilt. It could be as simple as a text, an invite, or just asking how they’re really doing. It’s not about fixing them—it’s about making sure they know they’re seen and not forgotten.