SERMON OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Safety officials have a slogan: "If you see something, say something." It teaches ordinary citizens: You can help save a life by being alert.

What if someone in the church is acting strangely, or you know of personal behavior that could harm themselves or others? The last two verses of the book of James say, basically: If you see something, say something.

[Jas 5:19-20 NIV] – 19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

I. WHEN SHOULD I SAY SOMETHING?

19: My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth

A. "Brothers & sisters if one of you…" It's a brother or sister in Christ.

B. "…if one of you should wander…." They're wandering down a dangerous path.

Don't be a "nitpicker."

But if they're wandering, starting bad habits down a new path, that's when to confront.

Wise older people have a saying: "Is it a _____ or is it _____?"

C. "…from the truth." They're believing something that's not true.

(1) Is your friend wandering intellectually from the truth?

(2) Is your friend wandering emotionally from the truth?

II. WHY SHOULD I SAY SOMETHING?

"… save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins!"

The stakes are too high!

Often you don't understand your own situation. You need someone else to point out the seriousness. You're too close to it! "You can't see the _____ for the trees."

Warning: These conversations often don't go well. But if you say nothing, you're likely to lose the relationship anyway. And love demands that you do the dirty job and be the "friend confronter."

SIDE ROAD: What about that famous passage that says "Don't judge"?

[Mat 7:1-5 NIV] 1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Did Jesus mean we should never make judgments about anyone's character or beliefs? _____

Later in that same chapter Jesus commands us to watch out for false prophets, saying, “You will know them by their _____.”

In saying, “Don’t judge,” Jesus was directing us not to have a judgmental or haughty spirit. Don’t be a bully!

3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

If you see a speck in your brother’s eye and you know it’s blocking his vision, what are you supposed to do?

III. HOW SHOULD I SAY SOMETHING?

A. A HELPFUL EXAMPLE: NATHAN CONFRONTS KING DAVID (2 Samuel 12)

After Nathan’s confrontation, David wrote:

[Psa 51:1-2, 4, 7-8, 10 NIV] – Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. … 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. ... 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. … 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

B. HOW TO CONFRONT THE WANDERER

(1) Prayerfully. (James 5:16)

(2) Wisely. (Prov. 15:22)

(3) Privately. (Matt. 18:15-17)

(4) Gently. (Gal 6:1)

(5) Truthfully. (Eph. 4:15)

(6) Lovingly. (Luke 6:31).

INVITATION

If you’ve been the one wandering, can I be your friend confronter today?

(1) If you’re already a believer and you know the truth, but you’ve been telling yourself lies to excuse your sin…

(2) If you don’t yet know God…

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Knowing When to Speak Up

- **Scripture Reference:** James 5:19–20 (NIV)
- **Scripture Paraphrase:** James writes that if any believer strays from the truth and someone helps turn them back, that person rescues a soul from spiritual death and helps cover many sins.
- **Discussion Question:** What is the difference between being overly critical about minor things and recognizing when someone is genuinely drifting down a dangerous path? How do you discern when it is truly time to say something?

2. Recognizing Our Own Blind Spots

- **Scripture Reference:** Matthew 7:3–5 (NIV)
- **Scripture Paraphrase:** Jesus asks why someone would focus on a tiny speck in another person's eye while ignoring a large wooden log in their own eye, instructing us to first deal with our own issues so we can see clearly to help others.
- **Discussion Question:** Why is it often so difficult to see our own faults while easily spotting the mistakes of others? How does acknowledging our own shortcomings change how we approach someone who is struggling?

3. Balancing Grace and Truth in Confrontation

- **Scripture Reference:** Galatians 6:1 (NIV) & Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)
- **Scripture Paraphrase:** Paul encourages believers to gently restore anyone caught in a sin while keeping a watch on themselves, and to speak the truth in love to grow mature in Christ.
- **Discussion Question:** Have you ever been on the receiving end of a helpful, loving correction, or had to offer one? What made that conversation go well, or what made it difficult?

4. Overcoming the Fear of Conflict

- **Scripture Reference:** Proverbs 15:22 (NIV)
- **Scripture Paraphrase:** Proverbs notes that plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.
- **Discussion Question:** The outline points out that these types of conversations often feel uncomfortable and risk the relationship if handled poorly. What holds us back from stepping in, and how can we rely on God's wisdom rather than our own fears when a friend is wandering?

5. Preparing Our Hearts Before We Speak

- **Scripture Reference:** James 5:16 (NIV)

- **Scripture Paraphrase:** James reminds believers that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
- **Discussion Question:** The first step listed for confronting a wanderer is to do so prayerfully. How does praying *for* someone beforehand shift your attitude and motive before you ever try to talk *to* them?

6. Responding When We Are the Wanderer

- **Scripture Reference:** Psalm 51:10 (NIV)
- **Scripture Paraphrase:** David prays, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."
- **Discussion Question:** When you realize you have drifted from truth or are making excuses for your own choices, what usually helps bring you back? How can our small group become a safe place where people feel comfortable admitting they have wandered?