

# God's Foreigners

People who belong to God  
should bless the world



**Here we have no lasting city.**

## International Buzz Dinner and Discovery

### Weekly Discussion Topics:

- God Promises to Bless the World
- Living like a Foreigner on Earth
- Seek Peace for the Place Where you Live
- God's Ultimate Foreigner
- Jesus' Followers are God's Ambassadors in the World
- Welcome to God's Kingdom
- Where is your Citizenship?
- Scattered throughout the World
- Life is a Test of Faith
- What is your Value to God?
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## God's Foreigners

### Preview



In the Bible, the people who belong to God become "foreigners" in the world. God chooses people out of all nations to represent God's kingdom. God's people do not leave this world. But they become outsiders - in whatever place that they live. So, "God's foreigners" become a blessing to all nations. We first see this in the life of Abraham.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

The Bible is filled with teaching about "foreigners." God chooses people who are resident aliens, sojourners, and temporary residents. They become central to God's plans to bless all of the nations of the world. The Lord "loves the alien" (Deuteronomy 10:18). Because of God's love, those who belong to God should treat aliens with love, justice, and respect.

You are an international scholar. You are distant from your home. You are far away from your natural culture. You may not believe in God. But you experience life in a foreign land. You know how it feels to be a stranger. You have a U. S. visa, but your passport and citizenship are in your nation. Because of your experience as a foreign scholar, you can actually help your American friends to understand the Bible's teaching on "resident aliens"!

For example, notice the following definitions:

- **A RESIDENT - ALIEN:** This is a person who lives in some country, but who is not a citizen of that country.
- **CHRISTIAN:** This is a person who lives in this world, but who is a citizen of God's kingdom.

You have come to live and study in America. But your customs, your taste in foods, and your ideas are shaped by your home. Your legal citizenship is based in your home nation. According to the Bible, when people become citizens of God's kingdom, they become foreigners in this world - even when they live in the land of their natural birth.

In this week's investigative study, we will look at a man known as Abram. When we first meet him in the Bible, he does not believe in one true God. But the Lord chooses him, and gives him a new name - "Abraham". God's plans to bless and restore the nations begin with this man. For all time, he will be known as "the father of all who believe." Three of the major world religions - Judaism, Islam, and Christianity - all claim Abraham as a founder.

God gives a promise to Abraham. He will bring God's blessing to all the nations. But, to bless the world, Abraham must be a foreigner in the world!

### Notes:

In ancient and modern nations, foreigners are sometimes treated badly. There is cultural and ethnic abuse, national pride, racial prejudice. We see this today in the political debates about "illegal aliens" or about immigration reform.

But, in the Bible, God's people are commanded to treat foreigners and resident-aliens with love and respect.

There are 3 reasons why God's people must not mistreat foreigners:

- 1) God's Old Testament people - the Israelites - were resident-aliens in the land of Egypt.
- 2) By nature, all people are alienated from God until they are saved from their sins.
- 3) All of God's people have a higher loyalty than their own nation or culture - because they are citizens of God's Kingdom.

## God's Foreigners

### Bible Passages



Genesis 12:1-9: <sup>1</sup> The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

<sup>4</sup> So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. <sup>5</sup> He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

<sup>6</sup> Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

<sup>8</sup> From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Galatians 3:6-9: <sup>6</sup> Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." <sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

<sup>8</sup> The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." <sup>9</sup> So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

### Discuss



1. Where is your home? Who, or what, did you leave behind?
2. What was most difficult when you left your home country? What was most difficult when you came here?
3. Genesis 12:1: What did God ask Abram to leave behind? Do you think it was easy or hard for him to believe and follow God?
4. Genesis 12:2-3: What did God promise to Abraham? Would this happen soon?
5. Genesis 12:4-5: How did Abraham respond to God's commands?
6. Genesis 12:6-9: Who was in the land that God promised to Abraham? Who would receive what God promised to Abraham?
7. Genesis 12:8-9: We observe Abraham building altars and pitching his tent. What does this say about the way Abraham lived in the land of Canaan? He did not receive the promise himself. How do we know that he believed God?
8. Galatians 3:6: What did Abraham receive because he believed God?
9. Galatians 3:7: Who are the children of Abraham?
10. Galatians 3:8: What is the "gospel," the "good news"?
11. Galatians 3:9: Who receives God's blessing?

### Chapter Summary

Beginning with Abraham, we see the way that God blesses the world. The Lord chooses people to become foreigners in this world. They do not leave the world, but they bring God's blessing to all nations. They become representatives of God's kingdom, not the land of their birth.



### Notes:

Genesis 12:2-3: Bless and blessing - To receive the favor and goodness given by God.

Genesis 12:4: Haran - an ancient city of Mesopotamia. Today, in SE Turkey. Abram's original city was Ur near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers - today, in SE Iraq.

Genesis 12:5, 6: Canaan, Canaanites - the land promised to Abraham is in modern Palestine, which was then occupied by the Canaanites.

Genesis 12:7,8: altar: a place of worship and religious sacrifices.

Galatians 3:6: credited to him as righteousness: Abraham was not a totally righteous man. But God loved him. Since Abraham believed in the Lord's promise, he was accepted by God.

Galatians 3:7: justify: to make right, to be put into a right relationship with God. Abraham's moral failures were not "charged" against him, and "righteousness" was "credited" to him.

Galatians 3:8: Gentiles: the original meaning is "nations." Later, this referred to those who did not belong to the people of Israel.

Galatians 3:8: gospel: the "good news" - what God has done to save people from all nations from their sins and their turning away from God.

## God's Foreigners

### Review



In most cultures, you are trained from childhood to remain loyal to your ancestors, family, culture, and nation. In Genesis 12, God commanded Abraham, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you." Since you are an international student, you can understand the sacrifices Abraham made! You have come to study in a foreign land - to improve your future life. And God promised to bless and protect Abraham and his family. How did Abraham live as a "resident-alien"? That is what we will discuss this week.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

Abraham was asked to trust and obey God. He had to let go of his family and culture. To do this, Abraham needed three things:

1. FAITH - Abraham needed to trust in God. He needed to believe God's promise more than he trusted his own wisdom. Did God know what was best for Abraham and his family? Could Abraham believe God's word?
2. HOPE - How can you let go of what is so valuable to you? You will not leave your family, friends, and country if you do not believe that there is the promise of a better future.
3. PATIENCE - Abraham did not quickly or immediately receive what God promised to him and his family. Abraham did not "get rich quick" by faith. Could Abraham wait for God's promise to be fulfilled?

This week, we will look more closely at the way that Abraham lived as a "stranger in a foreign country." God told Abraham that his children would inherit this land. He never personally received all that God promised him.

You have spent most of your life in your own country. You learned how people do things in your culture. You were educated, shopped, ate foods, and communicated in familiar ways. But now you are in a strange place. There is promise for your future. But things can be hard in the short-term.

Abraham was 75+ years old when God told him to leave his old life to start a new life. God promised Abraham a son. But his wife was an old woman. Nothing that Abraham could "see" helped him to believe God's promise. Abraham's identity was based on his natural family, that did not believe in God.

So Abraham left all of the comforts, possessions, and beliefs of his family and culture. His journey was based completely on God's promise. In the future, the land of Canaan would belong to his son and his grandchildren. But how did Abraham live in such a strange, foreign, and unfamiliar place?

### Notes:

Americans think of the U.S. as a "land of great opportunity" - where you can make a good life for yourself. But, in most ancient cultures, your security is based on your family and what you inherit from them.

## God's Foreigners

### Bible Passages



Hebrews 11:8-16: <sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup> By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. <sup>12</sup> And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

<sup>13</sup> ... these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

### Notes:

Verse 8: inheritance: the possessions that parents leave to their children - houses, lands, or family business. But Abraham lost those things when he left home. Abraham's inheritance would only come from God.

Verse 9: promised land: the land of the Canaan - in modern Israel and Palestine. This was the land God promised to Abraham and his family.

Verse 9: Heirs. Those who inherit. Isaac and Jacob were Abraham's son and his grandson.

Verse 10: Architect and builder: God is both the Planner and the Builder of Abraham's inheritance. Those who believe will not just receive a land, but a promised city.

Verse 11: barren: too old to conceive a child.

Verse 12: faithful: Abraham believed that God was reliable - God would keep his promises.

Verse 13: these people: all of the people who believe God's promises.

Verse 13: from a distance: Abraham had to believe God for his future life.

Verse 13: Aliens and strangers: This world is not the true home or the final destination of those who trust in the Lord.

Verse 16: Heavenly: The who believe in God are hoping for more than good things for this life. Believers hope for everlasting life in heaven with their loving God.

Verse 16: God is not ashamed: God is willing and happy to be known as the Father and God of all who believe in him.

### Discuss



1. How much did you know about America before you came here to study? What did you not realize until now?
2. Before you came to America, what things did you have to believe - based on what other people told you?
3. Hebrews 11:8: What is the evidence that Abraham lived "by faith"?
4. Verse 8: Did God give Abraham a complete, detailed "plan" for his new life?
5. Verse 9: How did Abraham, his son (Isaac), and his grandson (Jacob) live in the land God promised to them?
6. Verse 10: When he left his home land, Abraham lost his family inheritance from his parents. Based on this verse, why was Abraham not foolish?
7. Verse 11: What circumstances made it difficult for Abraham to believe God? Why did Abraham trust God for a son in his old age?
8. Verse 12: Did God keep his promise? How was Abraham's faith rewarded?
9. Verse 13 teaches that people like Abraham are examples to all who believe. How should all believers in God live in this world?
10. What challenges do you experience as an "alien and stranger" in America? Ask your discussion leader why it is hard for a Christian to live as a "foreigner" in this world.
11. What things make you "home sick"? When do you most want to go home?
12. Verses 15-16: What do those who believe in God "long for" - want the most?

### Chapter Summary

As you know from your experience as a international student, it is not easy to be a foreigner in a strange land. Those who believe in God's promise of a better future in heaven can learn from you! Christians are supposed to live by faith, as "aliens and strangers" any place on earth!



## God's Foreigners



### Review

God made a promise to Abraham. He promised that Abraham's family would bless all the people in the world. But the descendants of Abraham should live as people who trust in God. God's ancient people Israel, and Christians today, must live with faith, hope, and patience. This world is never the permanent residence or "home" for God's people.

### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)



God's people only bless the world when they live as citizens of God's kingdom. In all the Bible, we see Abraham's descendants living as "exiles" in foreign lands. But how should God's people live like "foreigners" in the world? That is what we will study this week.

During short times in Israel's history, God's people enjoyed life in Canaan, the "Promised Land." It was described as a "land of milk and honey," a rich farming area surrounded by deserts. Because it was good agricultural land, the "fertile crescent" was often invaded from Europe, Africa and Asia.

In the beginning of the Bible story, the first humans turned away from God. Because they did not trust and obey God's word, they were required to leave God's beautiful garden. (It was called Eden - probably in east Africa). God gave Abraham's descendants another "garden": the land of Canaan. But, like the first humans, the people of Israel turned away from the Lord. When they disobeyed God's word, they became "exiles" from their land.

"Exile" happened when God's people disobeyed him. In some ways, this was punishment. But did your parents send you to your room when you failed to obey them? Did they take something away from you? Were you ever required to leave your family table when you dishonored your family? Parents sometimes take away privileges so their children can become wiser.

For the people of Israel, life in a foreign land was good training. They were "home-sick" for their homeland, and they became "heart-sick" for the Lord. Once, Israel was captured and taken to Babylon. They said, "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered (our home) ... How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" (from Psalm 137). When you sing a song from your nation, does that make you miss home?

How do you live as a foreigner in a strange place? There are four options:  
1) HOSTILE: hate the foreigners who surround you. 2) CONFORM: lose your language and culture. Become more like the people where you live.  
3) ISOLATE: set up your own community in exile. Only spend time with your own people. 4) BLESS the foreign people with your own values and ideas.

### Notes:

Exile: Exiles are different than immigrants.

An immigrant decides to come to a new land. Immigrants hope to have a better life in a new place.

But an exile is forced to leave their own country. Exiles are taken away or removed by force from their home land and their native country.

## Notes:

Jeremiah was an Old Testament messenger of God. He was sent by God to tell the Israelites how to live during their 70 years of exile as captives in Babylon.

Verses 4, 7: exile: one who is forcibly removed from his own native land into a foreign land. An exile is usually a captive or one who is punished for a crime.

Verse 4: Israel: the Old Testament people of God. The people of Israel were descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whom God re-named *Israel*).

Verse 4: Jerusalem and Babylon: Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel. Babylon was the capital of the Babylonian empire that had conquered the people of Israel and forced them into exile.

Verse 7: peace and prosperity, prosper: all of these words translate one word in the original Bible: SHALOM: שָׁלוֹם. This is a rich Hebrew word that means "peace, welfare, health, harmony, wealth, salvation, completeness." SHALOM is the greatest blessing that God can give to any person or to any country on the earth.

## Bible Passage



Jeremiah 29:4-7: <sup>4</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup> Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup> Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

## Discuss



1. When do you most feel like an exile here?
2. What do you think is the right "balance" between spending time with your own people, and spending time with foreign people? 50 - 50%? 60 - 40%?
3. Verse 4: What had God done to the people of Israel?
4. Did your father or mother ever send you to your room - away from your family? Did you disobey or dishonor them? For what purpose were you an "exile"?
5. Verse 4: What does the word "carry" suggest as a purpose for their exile?
6. What are some things you hope to learn while you live in a foreign land?
7. Verses 5-6: List the things that God commands his people to do in Babylon. What do these activities tell us about living as God's people in a foreign land?
8. The people of Babylon had captured and "deported" the people of Israel. How would you feel if you were forced to leave your home land?
9. Verse 7: What attitude should Israel show to the people of Babylon?
10. In what ways can you "bless" your American friends while you study here? How could your American friends "bless" you during your time here?
11. What advice would you give a friend if they went to live in your home country? What are some things they should not do while they live in your country?
12. Verse 7: How do all people benefit when people who believe in God seek to bless the place where they live?

## Chapter Summary



Life as a foreigner can make you lonely for home. Do you miss your land? Do you want to return home as soon as possible? Or, do you hope to live and work in a foreign land before you return to your nation? No matter where God's people live, they should bless the people in that place. YOU enrich our lives by sharing your ideas and special cultural values with us while you are here. Thank you!

Christians must never conform to their nation, or become enemies of their nation. They are not to withdraw and isolate themselves from public life in their country. Christians pray and seek God's blessing - for any place where they live.

## God's Foreigners



### Review

In the Bible's 5,000 year history, God shows a special concern for foreigners. The first humans dishonored God. They became exiles from a beautiful garden. God chose Abraham to become the father of all who believe in God's promises. Abraham lived like a foreigner in a land that God promised to give him. Over the years, Abraham's offspring turned away from God. God's people became exiles again (in Babylon = modern Iraq). God told his people to bless the people in that foreign land.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

In all human history, and in all nations, people turn away from God's light. But, again and again, God reaches out to us in love. God wants to show us the truth about ourselves (our human nature). And God wants us to know the truth about himself (God's true nature).

What happens when we turn away from God? We become foreigners and exiles. We become outsiders to God's kingdom. When we reject God, we become God's enemies. But what if we turn to God? God welcomes us. We become citizens in God's kingdom. And there is even better news! When we accept God's truth and love, we are adopted into God's family! God wants all the world to know his truth and love. For many years, God sent messengers to his people Israel - the offspring and generations of Abraham. The messengers were called "prophets" who spoke God's word. When God's people believe God's word, they are blessed. And God's people can then bless other nations - just as when Israel blessed Babylon.

But, again and again, the people of Israel rejected God's messengers. The people of Israel rejected and killed the prophets. But God did not give up! God sent his one, true, and only Son into the world. Jesus Christ reveals to us, in human form, what God is like. Christ also reveals why we need God. Jesus Christ is "God's Ultimate Foreigner"? Why do we say that? Here are some of the reasons:

- God's Son came from outside, from beyond time and space, from eternity.
- God's Son had to be "like us" to live in our human world. But Jesus Christ did not become "like us" in every way. Jesus was still God's eternal Son.
- Jesus Christ lived as a "resident-alien" in this world. While in this world, Jesus said, "Foxes have holes. Birds have nests. But the Son has no place to lay his head." Jesus' home was heaven. Here, he had no lasting home.
- God's Son came into the world to live, be rejected, and die as a foreigner. Why? So that we can be accepted into God's kingdom and family.

### Notes:

Exiles: those who are forced to leave their home or country.

## God's Foreigners

(This week - read the Notes before you read this Bible passage)

### Notes:

Verse 1: the Word. This is one description for God's Son. God's Son reveals God. God's Son is more than a prophet. God's Son is also God.

Verse 9: the light, the true light. This is one more description of God's Son. God is light. God is the Source of all that is pure, illuminating, warm, and life-giving.

Verse 14: became flesh. God's eternal Son took on our human nature.

Verse 14: made his dwelling among us. These words mean "pitched his tent among us". In ancient times, God's presence and glory was in the center of Israel's camp. But, ultimately, God came to the people of Israel by dwelling in the person of Jesus Christ.

Verse 14: grace and truth. Grace is God's love for people who are not worthy. Truth is the reality of God, who never lies. Truth without grace is hard. Grace without truth is soft and emotional. Jesus Christ was full of real love and attractive truth.

### Bible Passage



John 1:1-5,9-14: <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He (God's Son) was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him (God's Son) all things were made; without him (God's Son) nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him (God's Son) was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He (God's Son) was in the world, and though the world was made through him (God's Son), the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He (God's Son) came to his own (the people of Israel), but his own (people) did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who received (Jesus Christ), to those who believed in (Jesus') name, God gave the right to become the children of God - <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> The Word (God's Son) became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen (Jesus Christ's) glory, the glory of the One and Only (Son), who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### Discuss



1. Verses 1-2: Where was the Word (God's Son) in the beginning?
2. Verse 3: What did the Word (God's Son) do?
3. Verses 4-5: How is light related to life? How is light related to darkness?
4. Verse 11: How did the people of Israel respond to the coming of Jesus Christ?
5. Verse 12: What will God give you, if you believe God's Word and receive God's Son?
6. How did you become a human child? Verse 13: How do you become God's child?
7. Verse 14: How did God reveal himself in more than words?

### Chapter Summary



God's Son was with God the Father from the beginning of time and before the world began. But God the Father sent God the Son into the world as a human being, to show us the love and reality of God.

God's Son came to God's people Israel. But the people did not treat him as one of their own people. They rejected him as an "unwelcome" foreigner. God's Son Jesus Christ knows what it is like to be treated as a stranger or an alien.

But if you welcome Jesus Christ, you are welcomed into God's family. You become an adopted child of God. You receive the "right" to call God your "Father." You are also "born of God." You receive a new nature so that you can learn to love God and love his Son Jesus Christ.

## God's Foreigners



### Review

From the start until the end of the Bible, God shows special love for "foreigners." God chooses people like Abraham. They live as resident aliens, sojourners, and temporary residents in this world.

Men and women who belong to God are included in God's plan to bless all nations. At the center of the Bible we meet God's Perfect Resident Alien. God's eternal Son, Jesus Christ, entered human history. Some people reject him as a foreigner. But all who welcome Christ can enter God's Kingdom.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

What is an "ambassador"?

An ambassador represents a government. He or she is a high official. Ambassadors are appointed by kings, presidents, or prime ministers. Then, ambassadors are sent to another country, and live in a foreign land. The ambassador becomes an official, authorized messenger for his government.

What makes a person a good or an effective ambassador? Here are some important qualifications for a good ambassador:

- Knowledge. Ambassadors must know the policies and plans of their own government. They do not promote their own ideas or personal plans.
- Cultural respect. Ambassadors must appreciate people in the foreign land. Ambassadors understand local traditions in the place where they go to live.
- National loyalty. Ambassadors do not communicate their own opinions. They are the messengers for their government. What does their king, president, or prime minister say? That is what they speak! They represent their country's interests, not their personal interests.
- Connected but not conformed. An ambassador must not live in isolation. Ambassadors must relate socially to foreign people. But the ambassador's main goal is to promote what is best for his own nation. Ambassadors must not become like foreign people with whom they live.

Ear Mouth



King

God's people are "ambassadors" for God's kingdom.

The traditional Chinese and Japanese character for "holy" (not the simplified character) is an illustration.

The character has three component parts, for the words EAR, MOUTH and KING. God's people must LISTEN to God, and SPEAK for God. They serve God as KING. (Notice, there is no EYE: we cannot see God.)

Jesus teaches his followers to be ambassadors of God's Kingdom. Christians must live in the world (like foreigners), but not live as citizens of the world.

### Notes:

resident aliens - those who live (or, reside) in a foreign (or alien) land.

sojourners - temporary residents who do not come to stay.

Ambassador: Most international scholars have a F-1 or J-1 visa. That visa gives you the permission to legally study and research in the United States.

But who is the highest official from your nation in the United States? That government official probably lives and work in Washington, D.C., to represent your home country. That official is called an ambassador.

Christians should live as resident-foreigners, even in their own nations. But, Christians serve as ambassadors of Christ and God's kingdom.

conformed - to become the same as everyone around you. To accept the values and loyalties of people you live with.

**Notes:**

John Chapter 17: Did you ever listen to two people who talk to each other? Though you weren't part of their conversation, did you hear what they were saying? That is what happens in this Bible section. Jesus Christ, God's Son, is talking to God his Father in heaven. In other words, Jesus is praying to his Father. When we read these words, we "listen" to the words that Jesus prays.

Verse 6: revealed: to reveal or make known. To uncover what had been hidden.

Verses 6, 8: your word, words: God's Message was given to Jesus Christ. Jesus taught them to his first followers. Those first followers (the apostles) recorded God's Word in the Bible.

Verse 15: evil one: one description for the devil. Jesus is praying for his followers to be protected from the power of sin and evil.

Verse 17: sanctify: to make holy, to set apart for God's purposes. To be appointed to speak and obey God's word.

**Bible Passage**



Selected from John Chapter 17: Jesus, God's Son, prays to God his Father.

<sup>6</sup> "I have revealed you (God) to (the people) ... you gave me out of the world. They were yours. You gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you... <sup>8</sup> I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. (My followers) knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me... <sup>11</sup> I will remain in the world no longer, but (my followers) are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

<sup>13</sup> "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that (my followers) may have the full measure of my joy within them. <sup>14</sup> I have given them (my followers) your word and the world has hated them, for they (my followers) are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not pray that you take them (my followers) out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They (my followers) are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

<sup>20</sup> "My prayer is not for (my first followers) alone. I pray also for (my future followers) who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we (the Father and Son) are one ... <sup>23</sup> May (all Christians) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**Discuss**



1. Verse 6: *Who did Jesus come into this world to reveal to us?*
2. Verses 6, 8: *What did Jesus give to his followers? In verse 6, how did Jesus' followers respond? In verse 8, how did Jesus' followers respond?*
3. Verse 11: *Where will Jesus go? Where will his followers remain?*
4. Verse 14: *Why do people in the world sometimes hate Christians?*
5. Verses 17-18: *Here, Jesus prays that Christians will be "sanctified" and "sent." How can you be "sanctified" by God? (see note).*
6. *Must you leave the world to become holy? What can make you holy?*
7. *What does it mean to be "sent"? How are Christians like ambassadors?*
8. Verses 20-23. *In these verses, Jesus prays for only one thing. What does Jesus want for all his followers? What impact will this have on the world?*

**Chapter Summary**



Christians live in all nations of the world. But when Christians accept God's Word, they will become spiritually different than other people.

But Christians still live in the world. They are ambassadors of God's kingdom. Christians live in the world, even though their home is in heaven with Jesus. While Christians live in the world, they must listen to their King and speak for their king. This is what it means to be "sanctified" or "holy." Christians are appointed to live as Christ's ambassadors in this world. Christians represent God's kingdom.

## God's Foreigners



### Review

The Bible teaches God's love for foreigners. All nations have turned away from God. But God promised to bring the world back into his Kingdom. Until you believe God's promise, you are a foreigner - outside God's kingdom. But, when you believe God and enter his kingdom, you become a foreigner in this world. So, you have a choice. Will you be a foreigner in this world? Or, will you live as a foreigner to God's Kingdom? God's Son, Jesus Christ, came to offer us citizenship in God's Kingdom.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

When you live as a foreigner in a place, you feel like an "outsider." The citizens who live around you may not treat you like their friend. Some native people may not welcome you. Some local people may even act like you are their enemy. What a sad and tragic situation!

For a foreigner, some activities are forbidden. You will not be allowed to vote in local elections. You may be restricted in how often you can travel. You may not receive "security permission" for certain jobs. There may be barriers to permanent employment - unless your visa status can be changed.

It is not easy to exchange citizenship in one country to another country. One nation may have different requirements than the other nation. You may not be permitted to be a citizen of more than one country at the same time.

During the Bible's Old Testament times, God's people were citizens of Israel. The ancient nation of Israel received God's promise and was governed by God's Laws. To enter God's kingdom, you had to become a citizen of Israel. God told Israel to become a "light for all nations." But people who refused to come to God's light continued to be "foreigners" to God's kingdom. Outsiders did not hear about God's promise of hope to restore the world.

People were divided. Nations became enemies. The world was divided between: 1) People who believed God, and 2) Those who did not believe.

God sent his Son into the world to remove divisions and to bring harmony. Jesus brought God's promise of peace for all nations. God's peace has two dimensions: vertical (peace with God) and horizontal (peace with people).

First, Jesus Christ invites people from all cultures, languages, and nations to be reconciled with God. Jesus is the way into God's Kingdom. Second, Jesus brings people into harmony with one another. When people come into God's kingdom, barriers and walls that divide people are removed.

Citizenship in God's kingdom and peace with other people are goals that we cannot accomplish. These are gifts purchased by the death of Christ.

## Notes:

God's Promise: In the first two chapters of the Bible, Genesis 1-2, we learn that the world was created to be a place where God reveals his kingdom of love and honor. But all people turned away from God. We have become exiles. We are removed from God's Kingdom. But, as early as Genesis chapter 3, God promised to send someone to rescue the world and to bring all the nations back into the Kingdom of God

Israel: after all the world rebelled against God as the true King, God chose Abraham's family to become His people. The small nation of Israel was commanded to bring the message of God's kingdom to all nations.

reconcile: to restore a relationship. To make enemies into friends.

## God's Foreigners

### Notes:

Verse 12: At that time: Before the coming of Jesus Christ. Like today, the world was filled with many nations. But only the small nation of Israel received God's promise to restore the world. You were either a citizen of Israel or you were a "Gentile" - a foreigner outside God's Kingdom.

Verse 12: separate, excluded, foreigners. We were all "outsiders" to God's nation, Israel.

Verse 12: covenants of the promise: Covenants are official commitments based on a promise. There are penalties if you break the promise.

In all the Bible, God's promise is a Savior who will restore the world to God's kingdom. All of God's covenants were fulfilled when Jesus:

- Fulfilled the promise.
- Kept God's commands.
- Paid our penalties.

Verse 14: Jesus made the two one, destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. Enemies build walls and barriers between each other. But Jesus breaks down walls that divide people and destroys the barriers (sin and death) that separate people from God.

Verse 15: one new man: The citizens of God's Kingdom come from all the nations of the world. God's people are the "new humanity" who belong to God's King, Jesus Christ.

Verses 17, 18: preached peace, access to God: Jesus came to offer all people peace with God and with each other. Jesus Christ provides us with access - the way to enter God's Kingdom.

### Bible Passage

Ephesians 2:12-18: (This is a letter written by a man named Paul to Christians who lived in Ephesus, a city now in modern Turkey. The people who received this letter had never been Jewish or citizens of the nation of Israel.)



<sup>12</sup> Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For (Jesus Christ) ... is our peace. (Jesus) ... has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> ... (Jesus Christ's) purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross... (Jesus) ... put to death their hostility.

<sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through (Jesus Christ) we both have access to (God) the Father by one Spirit.

### Discuss



1. Verse 12: In this sentence, find the words that describe what it means to be a "foreigner" outside of God's kingdom?
2. Verse 13: How does Jesus Christ bring people "near" to God who were once "far away" from God?
3. How much does it cost to become a citizen of God's kingdom? Who pays this price?
4. Verse 14: In this verse, what words describe divisions between people?
5. Verses 15-16: How does Jesus' death bring people together? What does the word "reconcile" mean?
6. Verse 17: What message did Jesus preach for those all over the world - to people who are "far" and to people who are "near"?
7. Verse 18: What does Jesus give to all people, everywhere, who believe in him?
8. Verse 18: If people who were enemies receive the same equal "access" to God - what will that mean for their relationship with each other?

### Chapter Summary

Jesus Christ came into the world to bring people from all nations into God's Kingdom. Those who were once far away from God are brought near to God. Those who were once enemies of God and each other become citizens together in God's kingdom.



Here is an illustration. When pieces of metal are attracted to a magnet, they also are brought close together. When people believe in Jesus Christ, they are brought near to God - and also near to each other.

Here is another illustration. When people immigrate to a new country, they come from different nations. But, when they become citizens of the new country, they are fellow-citizens. One day, people from all nations will be fellow-citizens in God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ died on the cross to bring people peace with God - and to bring them harmony with each other.

## God's Foreigners

Notes:



### Review

The Bible teaches about God's love for foreigners. God's people live like foreigners in the world. God's Son, Jesus Christ, came from heaven. But people rejected Jesus Christ. He was an unwelcome foreigner. People executed Jesus on a cross. People did not believe that Jesus was the King of God's kingdom. The Jewish people wanted a powerful king to win their political freedom. Romans did not want a king who competed with Caesar, their emperor. But Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Today, those who believe in Jesus continue to live in their home countries. But Christians are citizens of heaven and live as Christ's ambassadors.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

You have come to a foreign country to study. You currently live and work in this place. But this is not your home country. Your citizenship is not here. Your passport, language, and family, are in your home country. As an international scholar, you know how it feels to live in one place, but to still be a citizen in another place.

In the part of the Bible we will discuss, Christians are told their citizenship is in heaven. Why is this true? Jesus Christ is the King of God's kingdom. Christians believe that Jesus lived and died, then rose from his grave, and returned to heaven. In heaven, Jesus rules as the King of God's kingdom. Christians look forward to the day when Jesus will come back to the earth. At that time, heaven and earth will be in harmony. People from every nation will live in peace, health, and happiness in the kingdom of God.

Before Jesus Christ returns to rule as the King of heaven and earth, how should Christian people live? Christians should be loyal to their own nations. But, in living and working, Christ's followers should have higher goals, better loyalty, real honesty, and more humility than "national pride" can give you.

In the second century, people began to notice something about Christians. One Roman official wrote: "Christians do not differ from other people by nationality, language, or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities ... or speak a strange dialect ... In their dress, food, and general manner of life, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to live in ... Yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as if they were only passing through. They fulfill their role as citizens, but suffer hardships as if they were aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but their homeland, wherever it may be, is like a foreign country to them ... They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They are obedient to the laws. But they live on a level that is above the law."

## God's Foreigners

### Notes:

**Philippians, Philippi:**  
Citizens of the city of Philippi were called Philippians. They were Roman citizens. Because the city was a colony of Rome, it was a "directly governed municipality." Philippians lived far from Rome, but were proud to be Roman citizens. They were ruled from the Roman Empire's capital city. Their laws and customs were Roman. Just like Philippi was a "colony of Rome," Jesus wants Christians to be a "colony of heaven" in the world.

**The pattern we gave you:**  
The life of Jesus Christ and Christian leaders like Paul provided a "model" or "example" of the way Christians should live.

**Enemies of the cross:**  
Those who do NOT live according to the pattern of Jesus Christ. God's eternal Son was willing to become a human person. Jesus lived a humble life. Jesus died for other people. Jesus did not seek his own fame, but worked for God's glory. And Jesus was dishonored - He was tortured and executed on the cross. **Enemies of the cross** are not willing to live a humble and self-sacrificing life for other people.

**their god is their stomach:**  
These people do not serve the true God. They live for their appetites - for fame, sex, money power. They live for themselves, not Christ.

**Their glory is in their shame:** the people were proud about behavior that should have made them ashamed.

### Bible Passage



**Philippians 3:17-21:** This is a letter written by a man named Paul to Christians who lived in Philippi, a city located in Macedonia, north of modern Greece.

We are "reading the mail" that Paul has sent to Christians in the city of Philippi. Paul wanted Christians in this city to have higher motives and more spiritual goals than their neighbors. They should show in their lives that they are not just citizens of Rome. They are citizens of God's kingdom and ambassadors of Christ.

<sup>17</sup> Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

### Discuss



1. How do people on this campus know that you are a foreigner?
2. What good qualities are people in your country famous for? What wrong ideas do some people have about your nation?
3. First look at verse 20. This is the main point: "Our citizenship is in heaven." How do "citizens of heaven" look? How should a follower of Christ live?
4. People in Philippi wanted to live like "Roman citizens" (see the note at left). How should the Christians at Philippi be different than other people there?
5. Verse 17: Paul says that we receive examples and patterns for how to live. Why is training by example more effective than teaching with only words?
6. Verse 18: Describe Paul's emotions - how does he feel? What makes Paul sad?
7. Verse 19: Describe the lives of those who are enemies of Christ's cross.
8. Verse 20: Why should a Christian not set his mind on earthly things?
9. Verses 20-21: What is the great hope that Christians are eager for?
10. How should Christians (here or in your nation) be different than other people?

### Chapter Summary



Each of us honor the traditions, language, history, art and values of our home country. We all continue to respect our home cultures.

You may be proud of China's history and literature. You may love India's diverse cultures. You may celebrate the art of Turkey. You may enjoy French food, Italian wine, or Spanish dancing. Americans are proud of their individual freedoms.

When a person decides to be a Christian, he or she does not stop being Chinese, African, American, or European. There are Christians in all nations of the world. But a Christian is a citizen of God's Kingdom. God's King, the Lord Jesus Christ, rules in heaven. So Christians should live on earth as citizens of heaven.

## God's Foreigners

Notes:



### Review

The Bible teaches about God's love for foreigners. God's people live like foreigners in the world. God's Old Testament people - the nation Israel - rejected God's Son, Jesus Christ. They did not believe Jesus was the King of God's kingdom. Jesus told them, "My kingdom is not of this world." Today, Christians live throughout the world, as citizens of heaven. God wants Christians to live in all nations as Christ's ambassadors.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

We classify people by nationality. Are you American, Chinese, French, Italian, Korean, Spanish, or Turkish? Your passport will show your "nation of origin." We usually describe groups of people based on geographic, political, and cultural categories. But this is sad. And this can also be dangerous. We divide people. We think that people either belong to "us" or belong to "them." This can lead to hostility, instead of friendship. According to the Bible, people who follow Christ belong to God's kingdom. As we discussed last time, Christians believe their "citizenship is in heaven." If this is true, what are the practical benefits?

- Christians should be more loyal to the kingdom of God than to anything or anyone else. If you are a citizen of heaven, God commands you to be a good citizen of your nation. God commands Christians to love their family.
- You will honor God if you work to bless your nation and family. But, the Christian's "highest loyalty" is to the LORD and to God's kingdom.
- A group of people may come from different nations or cultures. They may speak different languages. But, when they all belong to God, they also belong to each other. They may have different passports. They may enjoy different foods. But Christians are "fellow citizens" of God's kingdom.
- When diverse people, from different places, share God as their heavenly Father, they are more than fellow citizens. They are also family members! Christians are spiritual "brothers and sisters," even though they come from different countries and cultures. Jesus said, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:21)

The good news of Jesus Christ gives healing and hope for this divided world. We are from different nations, but we do not need to become enemies. We can become fellow citizens of heaven. We can even become family!

The part of the Bible that we discuss tonight teaches us that God's kingdom is multi-national and multi-cultural. Christians are scattered in all nations. Throughout the world, God's people are ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

## Notes:

1 Peter: This means the "first letter" of Peter. John, Paul, and Peter wrote most of the Letters (or "epistles") in the Bible's New Testament. We refer to these letters by numbers: "1 Peter", "2 John," etc.

apostle: an ambassador, messenger, or official representative of Christ.

God's chosen people: God selected the people of Israel to represent his kingdom in the world. God did not choose them because they were good or powerful. (See Deuteronomy 7:7, 9:6.) Today, those who follow Christ are chosen by God to be his people, and to represent God's kingdom in the world.

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia: these are the names of provinces in Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

strangers in the world: Christians are "at home" in God's kingdom. But Christians are "strangers" in this world. A stranger is an "alien," "temporary resident," or foreigner.

The Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Notice the references to all three Persons of the one, true God ("trinity") in this Bible passage:

The Father chooses and foreknows. God knows his children before they come to know him.

Foreknowledge: know in advance. Because he is God, the LORD knows and loves us before we know and love him.

Jesus Christ sprinkles (washes away) sins by his blood.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies - devotes or dedicates people to serve God.

## Bible Passage



1 Peter 1:1-4: This letter was written by a man named Peter. He was one of Jesus Christ's first followers. Once again, we "read the mail" sent to Christians. These Christians did not live in one place. Notice the names of four provinces. Those who received this letter lived in different places in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Peter may have sent one letter by a messenger to be read aloud in each place. Or, Peter may have sent copies of his original letter to each place. Peter wants these Christians to know that they have a special part in God's plan for all the nations.

<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's chosen people, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> ... chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the (Holy) Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In (God the Father's) great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> ... through faith (you) are shielded by God's power until ... the last time ... <sup>6</sup> you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

## Discuss



1. What are some words that you do not understand? Important: read the Notes (on the left side of this page) before we discuss the following questions.
2. Verse 1: Who wrote this letter? Who received this letter?
3. Verse 1: Describe the Christians' relationship to God? How do Christians relate to the world? Where do these Christians live?
4. Verse 2: How does God the Father know his children? What work does God the Holy Spirit do in the lives of Christians? (see the Note)
5. Verse 2: How does Jesus Christ's death benefit people who believe in him?
6. In verse 3, God the Father is honored (praised) for many of his gifts in Christ. What are some of God's good gifts that are listed in verses 3-5?
7. Verse 6: Will a Christian's experience always be joyful? Why or why not?

## Chapter Summary



During Old Testament history (the older part of Bible), God's kingdom in the world was = the nation of Israel. The LORD chose Abraham. God promised to bless all the world through Abraham's descendants.

According to the Old Testament, Israel was known as God's "chosen people." But Israel rejected God's Son Jesus Christ. So, the LORD now invites people from all the nations - not only Jewish people - to become part of God's kingdom.

Today, there are no Christian nations. Followers of Jesus Christ are scattered in all the world. Christians must be ambassadors of Jesus Christ in every place.

## God's Foreigners

Notes:



### Review

The Bible teaches about God's love for foreigners. God's people have always lived like foreigners in the world. It is a great privilege to be a citizen of heaven. And it is a great honor to be an ambassador of God's kingdom. God scatters Christians in all of the nations of the world. Christians must show and tell everyone about God's love in Jesus Christ. But the world rejected Jesus Christ. Jesus warns his followers: "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first." (John 15:18) God gives eternal life to all who believe in Christ. But this life is a time when faith is tested.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

It is not easy to become a foreigner and to live in a strange land. You may have experienced this. You left the comfort of your home.

Now, as you live in a foreign land, you may have some hardships.

What are some difficulties when you live in this place, on this campus?

- Other students may not understand your language or your customs.
- Some local people may not pronounce your name correctly.
- Some people may have wrong ideas about your country or culture.
- Native people may treat you like a stranger, like you are "different."
- You may find that it is difficult to make good friends with local people.
- University professors teach in a way that is not familiar to you.
- Employers may not hire foreigners. They may not give you an H-1 visa.
- You are always under pressure to produce results from your work.

International students have more "tests" than academic exams and projects. Your whole life in a foreign country can be a series of "tests." Each day can bring a new hardship or a big trial that you must "pass" successfully.

So, how can you continue, when each day will bring you a new challenge? Probably, you believe that you are working toward a worthy and good goal. You will earn a Masters or PhD degree. You will have more opportunities for success than students who stayed at home, where life was easier.

But, there are other benefits before you reach your goal. For example:

- You will be able to communicate in more than one language.
- You will learn about other cultures, foods, ideas, and beliefs.
- You will develop a more "international" outlook on the world.

The Bible teaches that those who choose to follow Jesus Christ will become "foreigners" in the world. So, Christians will have hardships and difficulties. But going through these "trials" will also help them to grow in their faith.

## God's Foreigners

### Notes:

1 Peter: This means the "first letter" of Peter.

This letter was first one written to Christians who lived in different places in Asia Minor (Anatolia, or modern Turkey).

The language in this part of the Bible is complex. So these verses are based on and adapted from *The New Testament in Modern English*, from J. B. Phillips.

perish: to rot, die, go bad, decay, spoil.

salvation: eternal safety. God will be your Savior. The LORD will keep you safe now and forever. God's salvation includes forgiveness from sin, rescue from death, and protection from evil.

purify, purified: metals and glass become strong and pure by heating and cooling. This can be called "tempering" or "annealing." Impure or brittle metals or glass are changed and made stronger.

### Bible Passage



1 Peter 1:4-9: Peter was a messenger of Christ. We again "read the mail" that Peter sent to Christians. Peter explains that believers in Christ can expect two things. 1) After Christians die, they will enjoy their inheritance in heaven. 2) While Christians live in this world, their faith will be constantly tested.

<sup>4</sup> At this present time, you can already hope for your perfect inheritance that will never change or decay. Your inheritance has been "reserved" in heaven for you. <sup>5</sup> You are now guarded by God's power that operates through your faith. And, at the very end, your salvation will be fully revealed. <sup>6</sup> Even now, you already experience great joy. But you must also experience different kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> This is not an accident. All these trials happen to prove your faith. Your faith is infinitely more valuable than gold. Gold ultimately perishes. But gold is purified by fire. Trials purify your faith and prove that your faith is real and genuine. This is the final result: when Jesus Christ is revealed, he will be praised, honored, and glorified because of your faith. <sup>8</sup> At the present time, you cannot see Jesus Christ, but you love him. You trust in him. You are filled with joy that words cannot express. Your joy now is only a taste of heaven and future glory. <sup>9</sup> At the end, you will receive the goal of your faith in Christ: the salvation of your souls.

### Discuss



1. What is an "inheritance"? In your country, how do you receive an inheritance?
2. Verse 4: What kind of inheritance will Christians receive?
3. Verse 5: When will those who believe in Christ receive their inheritance?
4. Verse 6: What hope, and what warning, does Peter give?
5. Verse 7: Faith is compared to gold. How do you purify gold? How do you purify faith?
6. Verse 7: What is the final result of all the trials that Christians go through?
7. Verse 8: Christians love and trust Jesus. How do you feel when you love and trust another person?
8. Verse 9: What does "salvation of your souls" mean? Do you believe you have a "soul"? Do you think you could trust Christ to keep and protect your soul?

### Chapter Summary



"God's foreigners" live between two worlds.

When you belong to God's kingdom, your citizenship is in heaven. You will experience great joy. You look forward to eternal life with God. But, until the day you die, you will live in this world. You do not see Jesus Christ. You must live by faith - hearing and trusting Christ's words - not by what you see. Life in this world is filled with tests and trials. But God uses tests to help you grow. Metals become stronger by heating and cooling. Iron is transformed into steel. Impurities are removed by fire. When you experience personal weaknesses, you learn to trust God's power more than your own strength and wisdom.

Jesus taught: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

## God's Foreigners

Notes:



### Review

Throughout the history of the Bible, we see how much God loves foreigners. Even God's eternal Son became a human being - to be a "resident - foreigner." His home was in heaven. But God the Father sent his Son to live on earth. Why? Jesus had to become like us, so that we can become like him - citizens of heaven. God challenges people who trust and follow Jesus Christ to live like citizens of heaven and ambassadors of God's kingdom. But to live away from home is difficult and lonely. How can you continue to live like a foreigner on earth? You must remember the value of God's love - how much God loves you!



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

As an international scholar, you experience special challenges. You have emotions that other scholars do not easily understand.

International students must face cultural, academic, and personal pressures that local people do not have:

- Your friends and family at home expect you to achieve great success.
- Your faculty advisors may expect you to work harder than other students.
- If you do not succeed in your academic and research work, you may feel ashamed to tell your family and friends at home about your struggles.
- You set high goals for your life. You don't want to disappoint yourself.
- The challenges you face are all here - in a foreign land. But the standards for evaluating your success are there - in your home land. You must try to succeed here, so that you can please your friends and family there.

At times, these pressures can make you feel lonely and isolated. Sometimes, you may even feel worthless. What is the worth of your work? If value is measured by your performance and success, what is the value of your life?

Could you live with more confidence, if you knew that these things were true?

- Your grades, research, and degrees don't determine the value of your life.
- Even if you don't succeed, you are worth more than you can measure.
- Even if your friends, family members, and faculty advisors reject you, you are accepted by the only One whose evaluation will count - forever.

The Bible passage that we will discuss this week was written to Christians scattered throughout the world. They lived as foreigners in different lands. They wanted their lives and their work to honor their God. But they were misunderstood, rejected, and mistreated by other people. How could they endure loneliness and challenges with confidence? They needed to know the great value of their lives to God - the expense of God's love for them!

## God's Foreigners

### Bible Passage



We are reading a first century letter. Peter was a messenger of Jesus Christ. Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire, was often treated like a "god." Christians honored the ruling authorities. But they believed Jesus Christ is the King of God's kingdom. So, Christians experienced trials, tests, and persecutions. People sometimes hated the followers of Christ. So Peter writes to remind them about how much God loves them.

1 Peter 1:17-21: <sup>17</sup> Since you call on (God the) Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> (God's Son, Jesus Christ) was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup> Through (Christ) you believe in God, who raised (Jesus Christ) from the dead and glorified him ... so your faith and hope are in God.

### Discuss



1. Who are some people who evaluate your life and work?
2. Whose judgments do you worry about the most?
3. Verse 17: How is a father's evaluation different from an employer's evaluation?
4. Verse 17: How does God the Father evaluate and judge each person's work? What is the right response to God's perfect judgment?
5. Verse 18: What does it mean to be *redeemed*? (see the note). Who is the Redeemer, who fulfills the family responsibility to pay our debts?
6. Verse 18: How is our present way of life described? Why are *gold* and *silver* not enough to make us acceptable to God?
7. Verse 19: What is more valuable than silver or gold? Why is Christ's *blood* more *precious* than the sacrifice of an ordinary lamb?
8. Verse 20: When was this Lamb chosen? Who do you think *chose* this Lamb to redeem people from sin?
9. Based on verse 20, what is the value of your life?
10. Verse 21: What demonstrates that God approved what Jesus did?

### Chapter Summary



When you don't live up to your own standards of success, you can feel worthless.

When you don't measure up to other peoples' expectations, you can feel empty.

And God is the ultimate, impartial, perfect Judge. None of us live up to God's law.

But God chose his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer. Jesus lived a perfect human life that we cannot live. And Jesus sacrificed his life to pay the price for our failings.

So, what is the value of a life? Our worth is not based on who we are, or what we do.

Christ paid the ultimate price to make us God's family, the citizens of God's kingdom.

Even if people judge or reject you, you can know that you are loved by God.

### Notes:

1 Peter: This is the "first letter" that Peter wrote to Christians living in Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

impartially: God's justice is perfect. God evaluates all humans on the same basis. No one buys God's favor. God is not biased: God does not accept or reject you based on who you are or what you do.

strangers: people who live in a place that is not their home - they are foreigners.

reverent fear: To live with reverence, devotion, and awe for God.

perishable things: things that spoil, rot, go bad.

redeemed: One of the most important Bible words!

There are two main ideas:

- A Family Relationship
- Making a sacrifice.

Today, people in debt become "bankrupt." In ancient cultures, and in Old Testament times, people who owed money could lose their lands or their freedom. Some become slaves to pay their debts. A Redeemer was a relative who paid your debts for you. What does it mean for God to become your Redeemer - One who buys your freedom?

empty: useless, worthless.

lamb: In Old Testament times, people sacrificed a lamb to be a substitute sacrifice for their sins. The traditional Chinese character "Yi" illustrates how a lamb's blood can "cover over" your guilt.



chosen, raised, glorified: Before God made the world, God chose his Son to become the Lamb to redeem us - to sacrifice his life to pay the price of our sins. Because Jesus made this sacrifice, God raised him from the dead and gave Jesus the highest place of honor and power.

## God's Foreigners



### Review

During these past weeks, we have learned from the Bible that God loves foreigners. People called "foreigners" are important in God's plan. Even God's eternal Son lived and died like a foreigner on earth. Jesus Christ's home was in heaven with God his Father. But Jesus came to earth to accomplish God's plan to rescue us. We have also learned that those who follow Christ should be good representatives of God's kingdom.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

Last week, we discussed some pressures of living like a foreigner. This week, we study Bible words that describe many privileges and responsibilities of Christians - who are "God's foreigners" in the world.

As a foreign student, you have privileges and responsibilities to represent your home nation. While you are in America, you know that:

- You are proud of your nation's history. You will tell your American friends the story about your nation.
- You will teach local friends the values, customs, and hopes of your culture.
- Some people have wrong ideas about your nation. You can correct them.
- By the way you live, you will be a good ambassador for your country.
- You can help friends to appreciate and honor many good and positive things about your country. Cross-cultural friendship is better than politics!
- You can invite and welcome your American friends to visit your country.

As "God's foreigners," Christians experience similar responsibilities:

- The Bible is the history of God's kingdom in the world. Christians want to show and tell their friends the story about God and about God's people.
- Americans, and all people in the world, need to learn the values, customs, and hopes of God's kingdom.
- All people - both Americans and internationals - have wrong ideas about God's kingdom. Christian people will share the truth about God.
- When Christian people are kind, loving, generous, and honorable to other people, they are good ambassadors for God's kingdom.
- Christians will invite their friends to come and learn about God's kingdom. They also invite friends to become citizens of God's kingdom. You will not lose your nationality, culture, or passport when you enter God's kingdom!

At the end of our discussion, we will talk about how to become a citizen of God's kingdom. And in the next two weeks, we will finish our course by asking 1) How do citizens of God's kingdom relate to human governments? 2) How should Christians respond when they are mistreated as foreigners?

Notes:

## God's Foreigners

### Bible Passage



Peter was a first century messenger of Jesus Christ. He wrote these words to followers of Jesus Christ in Anatolia (Asia Minor, modern Turkey). Christians who received this letter were not always appreciated or understood. Some were treated badly by other people. Peter reminds these Christians of their privileges and responsibilities to live as citizens and ambassadors of God's kingdom. Their neighbors and friends needed to see what God was really like!

1 Peter 2:9-12: <sup>9</sup> You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people (who belong) to God ... (so) you may declare the praises of (God) who called you out of darkness into (God's) wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day (the LORD) visits us.

### Discuss



As you answer these questions, use the Notes on the left of this page.

- Verse 9: What words describe followers of Jesus Christ?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Verse 9: What does God call people out of? What does God call people into?
- Verse 10: What must you receive from God to become part of God's people?
- Verse 11: What are God's people in this world?
  - They live as \_\_\_\_\_ in the world.
  - They live as \_\_\_\_\_ in the world.
- Verse 11: What can harm and attack your soul, to hurt your spiritual life?
- Verse 12: Why should Christians live in an honorable way?
- Compare verses 9 and 12: Who should get glory for good words and deeds?

### How do you become a citizen of God's kingdom?

You have probably been a citizen of your own nation since you were born.

Through your parents' citizenship, you received citizenship in your country.

But how do you become a citizen of another country? That will be much more difficult! To become a U.S. citizen, you need an employer to pay the price to sponsor you. Even an H-1B visa does not make you a legal citizen! You will also need a "green card." Finally, you may need to give up your natural citizenship to be an American citizen.

But what about God's kingdom? You will not need to give up your culture or passport! You will need a "new birth" and a "new sponsor." Unlike citizenship in any nation, you cannot become a citizen of God's kingdom by your hard work. You can only enter God's kingdom by the LORD's mercy. Jesus is the perfect "sponsor" who pays the price for your citizenship and gives you a spiritual birth. Your teacher will summarize.

### Notes:

chosen people: God has chosen people to serve as the ambassadors of his kingdom.

royal priesthood: This combines two ideas. Royal refers to a king - a person who rules. Priesthood refers to a priest - someone who brings you close to God.

holy nation: a people "who belong to God." Today, God's people live in many nations. But, as illustrated in the traditional character, people who submit to, listen to, and speak for God as their king.

Ear Mouth



King

declare the praises: show and tell your friends and neighbors about God's greatness and excellence.

called you: The Bible says that no human person can make you believe in God. Only God can convince you to trust Jesus Christ. The word call is the source of the word "vocation." The "job" of God's people is to live and work for the glory of God in all things.

wonderful light: After you believe in God, you will be amazed. The reality of God will shine on you.

receive mercy: God's love and kindness are never earned or deserved by us. God's love is God's gift.

aliens and strangers: those who belong to God are foreigners in the world.

Gentiles: people in the world who do not believe in God. People who are not part of God's people.

The day the LORD visits us: The Bible teaches that, at the end of history, Christ will return in glory as Lord and Judge of all people.

## God's Foreigners



### Review

We have learned together from the Bible that God loves foreigners. God chooses foreigners to be ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven.

God sent his eternal Son into the world to live and to die as a foreigner. All who believe, trust, and follow Jesus Christ become the citizens of heaven. "God's foreigners" are chosen to be the ambassadors of God's kingdom. What is the relationship between God's kingdom and human governments?



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

Did you ever experience "divided loyalty"? What if your American friends or advisors say something that is bad about your country?

Can you be loyal to that friend? Or, must you stay loyal to your nation? How do you defend your country from people's ignorance and criticism?

We will not discuss politics! We will not criticize any form of government. But, here is a practical question. What is the highest loyalty for a citizen of God's kingdom? Can you be both loyal to God, and loyal to your nation?

Many international scholars think the U.S. is a "Christian nation." But no government can enforce God's will. The LORD's kingdom is international. The citizens of God's kingdom live in all the nations. True: some nations are much influenced by Christianity. But God's kingdom ≠ human government. If a government claims absolute power, it will be a dangerous rival to God. Americans often say their country is "under God." That does not mean that all Americans believe in God. But it does mean that no human government can be absolute. God's kingdom over-rules every world government.

History tells us about many fights about religion and wars in God's name. Throughout the world, both religious and atheist rulers can oppress their citizens and enemies. What does the Bible say about God and government?

- Jesus Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If (my kingdom) were (of this world), my servants would fight..." (from the Bible, John 18:36).
- "The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all." (from the Bible, Psalm 103:19)
- God is the One who appoints governments to bring order into the world: to approve what is right and punish what is wrong: "There is no authority except that which God has established." (from the Bible, Romans 13:1)
- People who believe in God should be good citizens. But, what if a ruler demands absolute loyalty? What if a ruler forbids what God commands? Then Christians say, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29).
- If a ruler acts like a "god," the real God can lower him. One king said, "Now I praise ... and glorify the King of heaven ... everything (God) does is right ... all (God's) ways are just. And those who walk in pride (God) is able to humble." (from the Bible, Daniel 4:37)

## Notes:

rival: one who competes for the same position. Human rulers cannot take the place of God. Governments have authority over people, but not ultimate control or sovereignty over all. God is the KING over all kings, and the LORD over all lords.

God's Foreigners

Notes:

Submit: to obey orders.

the LORD's sake: for the LORD's honor and benefit.

every authority instituted: God created institutions that keep order for life and harmony in this world.

supreme: one who has control, who has superior authority over others.

sent by him: local officials are "sent" by the central government or king into local provinces. But Peter knows God has ultimate control. So "him" may ultimately refer to God as the supreme King.

commend: to praise those people who do good. The opposite of punishing the evil-doers.

God's will: What God desires for people. God's will can refer to God's laws or to God's plans.

fear: This is not the same as "be afraid." Respect or reverence, with awe and wonder for God's purity, and majesty. "Fear God" means to "worship" God.

Bible Passage



Peter was a first century messenger of Jesus Christ. Peter wrote these words to followers of Jesus Christ in Anatolia (Asia Minor, modern Turkey). The Christians who received this letter were sometimes not trusted by their rulers. The Christians claimed, "Jesus Christ is LORD." Should Christians disobey their human governments?

1 Peter 2:13-17: <sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the LORD's sake to every authority instituted among men ... to the king, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

<sup>16</sup> Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil. Live as servants of God. <sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Discuss



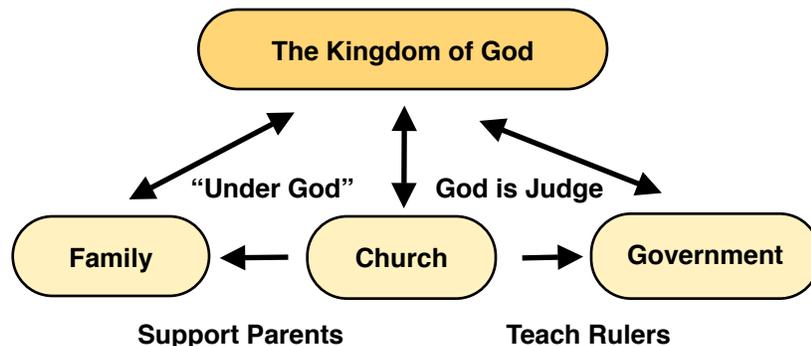
1. Verse 13: How should believers in God relate to authorities?
2. Verse 13: Why should a Christian obey a human ruler?
3. Verse 14: What is the "job" that God gives to rulers?
4. Verse 15: What is God's will for his people in the world?
5. Verse 15: For what purpose should Christians do good things in the world?
6. Verse 16: What does it mean to "cover up"?
7. Verse 16: Can you be a "free man" in society (not a slave of other people) but also live as "God's servant"?
8. Verse 17: God requires Christians to demonstrate three levels of respect. What are they? Which of these is the most impressive for the world to see?

Harmony and Order in the World



The Bible teaches that God has created "realms" or institutions for the peace and harmony of society. These are: the family, the government, and the church.

God sets up FAMILIES to train future generations. God sets up GOVERNMENTS to enforce justice and prevent chaos. And God sets up CHURCHES to teach rulers and parents to seek wisdom and guidance from God, who is the LORD over all authorities.



GOD'S KINGDOM rules over all. Families, governments, and churches must not claim absolute power. These institutions do not control each other. All are "under God." Each influences the others, but each is directly accountable to God's judgment. And God's people, from all nations, should treat each other as brothers and sisters.

## God's Foreigners

Notes:



### Course Summary

This is our last discussion on "God's Foreigners." So, we should summarize what the Bible has taught us about this important topic!

### Review Key Ideas (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

Here are some of the important points that we have discovered in the Bible. We have discussed these key ideas during the past weeks:

1. The Bible teaches us about God's special love for foreigners.
2. God's kingdom is international. The LORD rules over all the world's nations.
3. In the Bible, people who belong to God continue to live in the world. But, they do not belong to the world. They are "foreigners" on earth.
4. God sends his people into all the nations of the world. God's people must be ambassadors of God's kingdom to their friends and neighbors.
5. Beginning with Abraham, God tells his people to live in the world and to "bless" the world. Jesus' followers should serve God and other people.
6. By showing and telling the good news ("gospel"), God's people spread God's love and honor through all the nations of the world.
7. Citizens of God's kingdom don't lose good things from their own culture. But God's people find their identity and their security in God's kingdom. They must not live in the same way as their friends. God's people are "in the world," but should not live like the rest of the world.
8. God's people must love the LORD their God, and also their neighbors.
9. Jesus Christ is the only perfect Foreigner. Because Jesus is God's eternal Son, His home is in heaven with God the Father. But Jesus Christ lived on earth as a foreigner
10. Jesus perfectly loved God the Father. Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life. Jesus loved God with all of His heart, His soul, mind, and strength. Jesus loved His neighbors more than He loved Himself. Jesus lived a perfect human life. He always pleased God. We cannot live a perfect life.
11. Jesus Christ came into the world from heaven. But Jesus was hated and rejected by his own nation like an unwanted foreigner. Jesus never did anything wrong, but he was put to death on a cross like a criminal.
12. If you trust your life to Christ, He will pay for your Passport to heaven. When you follow Christ, He will sponsor your Visa into God's kingdom. Because of Jesus' life and death, you can become a citizen of heaven.
13. When you become a citizen of God's kingdom, you will be tested in the world. You must continue to be a good citizen of your native country.
14. But you may be treated like a foreigner, even in your own country. You will not lose your culture. But your people may reject or mistreat you. This week, we will discuss this social "cost" of following Jesus Christ.

## God's Foreigners

### Bible Passage



Peter was a first century messenger of Jesus Christ. Peter wrote these words to followers of Jesus Christ in Anatolia (Asia Minor, modern Turkey). Because the Christians who received this letter were "God's foreigners," they were often treated badly by their employers, friends, family members, and business associates. (Because of complex words, this Bible section is adapted from *The Message* translation.)

1 Peter 2:18-25: <sup>18</sup> You who are servants, be good servants to your masters – not just to good masters, but also to bad ones. <sup>19</sup> What counts is that you put up with it for God's sake when you are treated badly for no good reason. <sup>20</sup> There's no ... virtue in accepting punishment (that) you ... deserve. But if you are treated badly for good behavior and (then) continue ... to be a good servant, that is what counts with God.

<sup>21</sup> This is the kind of life you have been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. (Jesus Christ) suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it ... <sup>22</sup> (Jesus) never did one thing wrong ... (Jesus never) once said anything (wrong).

<sup>23</sup> They called (Jesus) every (bad) name ... and he said nothing back. (Jesus) suffered in silence, (and trusted God to) set things right. <sup>24</sup> Jesus used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be (free from) sin, (and) free to live the right way. Jesus' wounds became your healing. <sup>25</sup> You were lost sheep with no idea who you were, or where you were going. Now (you have returned to) the Shepherd of your souls.

### Discuss



1. Verse 18: What kind of "boss" should a Christian obey?
2. Verse 19: Why should followers of Christ obey bad masters - even those "bosses" who treat them badly?
3. Verse 20: In what circumstances are you honored when you are punished? When does your suffering not "count" for God's honor in your life?
4. Verses 21-22: From these verses, describe the way that Jesus Christ lived.
5. Verse 23: How was Jesus Christ treated badly?
6. Verse 24: What was God's purpose for the unjust suffering of Jesus?
7. Verse 25: How should you respond to Jesus' suffering on the cross?
8. Verse 25: What is the benefit of following Jesus - even if you may suffer?

### Summary



There are many benefits when you trust and believe in God's Son, Jesus Christ. You will receive a Passport to heaven. You will be adopted into God's family. You will be set free from sin's guilt and power. If you follow Christ, you will be given a Visa into God's kingdom. You can become an ambassador to your friends and nation.

While Christians live in this world, they show and tell other people about God's love. God invites and commands Christians to follow the path and the way of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was God's Son. Jesus lived as God's perfectly obedient human servant. But Jesus was treated badly and punished for things he did not do. In the same way, Jesus' followers may be treated badly. They may be blamed for things they do not do. Christians know that Jesus was treated this way. They trust God to make all things right.

### Notes:

servants / masters: In the 1st century, slavery was common and accepted. People that the Romans captured in war became slaves. Even this was not as bad as the 17th and 18th century slave trade: when people were stolen from families and treated like personal property. This Bible passage will become more meaningful if you apply this to your work situations: bosses and employees. Do you ever feel like a "slave" to your faculty advisor?

For God's sake: to live in a way that will honor God. Do not live for your own comfort or honor, but for God's glory and honor.

virtue: your own honor or good quality.

invited: God invites people to follow Jesus Christ as Lord. And God "calls" Christians to live in a way that is like Jesus Christ, to point other people to God.

set things right: Jesus Christ did not say things to condemn people when they mistreated and hurt Him. Instead, Jesus looked to God as the final, perfect Judge of all human actions.

servant body: God's eternal Son came in a human body to be God's perfectly obedient Servant. Because Jesus came as a man, Jesus could die as our Substitute - to pay for our sins against God.

sheep - Shepherd: this is a popular word picture or illustration in the Bible. The LORD is like a good Shepherd. We live like lost sheep. But God guides and feeds us. Jesus Christ said, "I am the Good Shepherd ... I lay down my life for my sheep." (John chapter 10).