

# Strangers in the World

## Disciples Forfeit to Follow Lesson 3

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### Introduction

“Strangers” is a term the Apostle Peter used to describe Christians living in this world. As we grow in our Christian faith this reality becomes more and more evident—“I’m but a stranger here; heaven is my home.” At the same time, God’s will is that we remain in the world until he calls us home. Through this four-week study we will learn from different believers throughout Scripture who have grappled with this reality. We will see how the Lord in his grace sets their hearts and ours on things above and how he equips us to live as strangers in the world.

Today we will consider the 12 disciples. The Lord chose twelve ordinary men from their various professions and called them to a life of service as his disciples. Through their connection to Christ, these men would realize that they would like strangers in the world. This realization didn’t happen overnight. There was quite a learning curve, even for these men whom the Lord handpicked. Throughout our lives, our understanding of what it means to be strangers in this world grows and develops just like it did for the disciples.

### What does it mean to follow Jesus?

**Matthew 10:2-4** – *These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

What do we know about the disciples’ backgrounds?

What did following Jesus mean for the disciples?

Earlier in Matthew Jesus responded to a teacher of the law who wanted to follow him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (**Matthew 8:20-22**). Why do you think Jesus would say those things to people who wanted to follow him?

**Matthew 10:5-20** – *These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, preach this message: “The kingdom of heaven is near.” <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. <sup>9</sup> Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; <sup>10</sup> take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*

*<sup>11</sup> “Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup> If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. <sup>16</sup> I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> “Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup> On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup> for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Where was Jesus sending the twelve apostles?

We are not “sent ones” in the same sense as the apostles. Jesus hasn’t called you away from family and profession and sent you on the same mission as the twelve. However, you still live and work in the same world into which the apostles were sent. Which difficulties mentioned above do you identify with as a Christian today?

Many years later, Peter echoed Jesus’ instruction about being innocent (verse 16) when he urged believers to “live as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 1:11-12). Why must we strive to be innocent as we live as strangers in the world?

Being a stranger in the world doesn’t mean we’re oblivious to the ways of the world and being innocent doesn’t mean we are to be pushovers. How can we be as shrewd as snakes as we live as strangers in the world?

**Matthew 10:** <sup>21</sup> “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>22</sup> All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup> When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

<sup>24</sup> “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

<sup>26</sup> “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. <sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

How do you think these words initially struck the disciples? How do they strike you as you ponder and apply these truths in your life?

Who is the one who destroys both soul and body in hell?

In verses 21-25, Jesus talks about the murder, betrayal, rejection, and hatred that his disciples will experience. Then in verse 26 he says, “do not be afraid of them.” How can Jesus say all that and then say, “don’t be afraid?”

**Matthew 10:** <sup>34</sup> “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— <sup>36</sup> a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” [Micah 7:6]

<sup>37</sup> “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup> and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

<sup>40</sup> “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. <sup>42</sup> And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

These are shocking words from the Prince of Peace! Consider the following phrases:

“Not peace but a sword...”

“A man against his father...”

“A cross...”

“Whoever finds his life...” vs. “Whoever loses his life...”

What were the disciples forfeiting to follow Jesus?

Do Christians today forfeit as much in order to follow Jesus?

As we read through Matthew 10, which themes stick out more: Being rejected or being accepted? Division or unity?

The words of Jesus in Matthew 10 were spoken to prepare the disciples as they went into the Judean towns, and later as they carried out their Apostolic work in the world. How do these words of Jesus also prepare and encourage us as we live as strangers in the world?

### ***First the cross, then the crown.***

**1 Peter 4:12-16** – *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*

Why is the teaching of Christ and his cross so offensive to human nature?

Why is the teaching about the Christian's cross (suffering/difficulty as a result of following Jesus) offensive to our sinful nature?

Peter had his struggles throughout life. In the gospels, those struggles to grasp what it meant to bear a cross are evident. How had Peter grown in his understanding later in life?

How has your understanding developed as you've grown in faith?

**For further study:** Read **Acts 1-4**. See how the disciples grew in their faith from the time their ministry began to when they stood before the Sanhedrin.