

Delivered by Elder Wallace Johnson

# OUTLINE FOR SERMON 1-26-2020

## WELCOMING THE STRANGER

Three scripture readings

First Scripture Reading: (OT) Exodus 22:21

Second Scripture Reading (OT) Leviticus 19:33-34

Third Scripture Reading: (NT) Philippians 3:15-21

Focal Scripture Reading: (NT) Ephesians 2: 11-22

Welcoming a Stranger

Stranger the dictionary (MW) definition

**a(1) : FOREIGNER**

**(2) : a resident alien**

**b** : one in the house of another as a guest, visitor, or intruder

**c** : a person or thing that is unknown or with whom one is unacquainted

**d** : one who does not belong to or is kept from the activities of a group

**e** : one not privy or party to an act, contract, or title : one that interferes without right

**We are all strangers.**

Philippians 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Have you ever felt uncomfortable as a church visitor while attending church out of town?? At that time you were a Stranger.

Ever been someplace where you are the only Christian in the room? You met the criteria for being a stranger.

**God is clear about how "strangers" should be treated.**

Leviticus 19:34 "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. "

We are all neighbors in God's kingdom. In fact, the "royal law" found in John 15:12 is "Love each other as I have loved you." Also, in Matt 22:38 Jesus states "love your neighbor as yourself." Note, how consistent the Old and New testaments are on this command from God.

What about strangers who are sinners?

Jesus embraced strangers as seen in Matthew 9:9-13 After Jesus asked Matthew the tax collector to follow him, he had dinner at Matthew's house. "While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said "it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus serves as an example of how we need to engage strangers even those who are sinners, it provides an opportunity to embrace salvation rather than condemnation. Remember breaking bread with a person was a very intimate way to interact with a person in ancient times, so the Pharisees were likely both jealous and upset. But Jesus would rather tarnish his reputation among the elite than ignore a sinner.

This does mean we cannot be wise and cautious when meeting someone we do not know

Why would God ask us to welcome strangers?

We need to know how vital outreach and evangelism are in order to serve Christ better. When we welcome a stranger, it is an opportunity to share the good news about Jesus and the price he paid for our salvation. We all have access to our "citizenship in heaven" if we accept God's gift to us and strive to follow his commands. God commands us to reach out to the poor, the oppressed, the lonely and the outcast from society.

Matthew 25:44-46: When the people asked "Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or in prison, and did not help you? He will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. "

Can the Great Commission in Mathew 28:18-20 be any clearer?? Verse 19:" Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Stranger outreach mandatory not optional.

In summary, how should devout Christians greet and treat strangers? Do Godly ACTS

**A**cknowledge Jesus in all ways on all your given days. One can best acknowledge with a Knowledge of your Lord and Savior. In practice, this means join a Bible study group at church to know God's words so you can follow God's commands and fully acknowledge him.

**C**ommunicate with Confidence because sometimes people can be confrontational and argumentative.

Jesus teaches in Luke 12:11-12: "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." So be confident in the fact that the Holy Spirit will speak through you and for you.

Team up. Luke 10: 1-2 "...the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them 2 by 2 ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." In practice, we need to be sure we are filling our role as part of God's team. At church you can find a prayer partner who can provide wisdom and strength so you can find the best way to reach out to an unbeliever and fulfil your role on God's team.

Set up future contact with a visitor and follow-up. Do you follow-up with the church "team" if a visitor does not return to church? Do you make sure visitors sitting near you fill out the Friendship pads given to them for future communication? In practice, set up a date for future communication and invite the visitor to an event like the March 29<sup>th</sup> Health Insurance workshop and the Anniversary celebration.

The Ultimate "Stranger" is one who does not have a relationship with Jesus? Sadly, we know that some come to church regularly but with their minds on nothing but "earthly" things. As tragic as it is to see a man die in a hospital because he does not follow the medical advice he is given, it pales in comparison to a person who is often in church but chooses to be "outside" of a relationship with Jesus. Thus, making their earthly death an eternal death rather than a pathway to eternal life in heaven.

That is why we must know.....

How does God treat strangers?

God sent Jesus Christ to earth for the Gentiles since they truly did not know him. While for the Jews who knew God through the scriptures and worship, God sent Jesus so they could receive salvation. Philippians 3:17-18. "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near (Jewish persons). For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

John 4:1-30 The outcast Samaritan Woman

AMEN

Challenge

We are all strangers/aliens at some point spiritually or physically

God commands us:

to reach out to strangers/aliens/sinners with a hand of friendship like Jesus

be an example to others by demonstrating good Christians acts and behavior when we meet strangers/aliens

share the Good News of Jesus with ALL the people around us

The questions now are:

Are you a willing and obedient Christian?

Are you a good witness for Christ even in the presence of strangers?

Can you commit to Bible study so you can be a stronger witness next year than you are now?



We can demonstrate obedience to Christ through our words and deeds only if we know the Bible and do as we promise both inside and outside the church. You can challenge yourself to see if you remember what "birthday gifts" you promised to give Jesus during our prior worship services in the holiday season. Challenge yourself to write down how you might approach different people at multiple levels of Christian maturity who are considering joining Mt Paran. An unbeliever? A new Christian believer without a church home? Or a very "mature" Christian looking for a church home? Then, converse with you church family about what you have written and then team up with your church family to do as you have written. Let's look at welcoming an unbeliever. Have you ever tried to introduce someone to another person you really did not know? Difficult yes? As you use the opportunity to introduce an unbeliever to Christ and his gift of salvation, you can only welcome him/her as well as you yourself have welcomed Christ into your own heart.

Will focus on the fact that we all are really strangers/foreigners at some point in our lives, but we are all citizens who has their real home in heaven if we sincerely accept the gift of salvation Jesus provides. We are to love our neighbors.

STOP these are my extra notes!!

How do we treat strangers?

Do we view one who is a 'stranger' as a danger to us? This does mean we cannot be wise and cautious when meeting someone we do not know but we know that Jesus sat down and ate with sinners and tax collectors (Luke 15-1-2) Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep in which the shepherd leaves 99 sheep to search for one lost sheep because he was in danger and also because he was important to the shepherd. God wants to bring lost people out of the danger of deadly sin and into the loving arms of Jesus by sharing the gospel of the Bible through conversation with his believers that follow his commands.

Does having a different language or belief automatically make someone a stranger in your eyes?

Do we seek to introduce Jesus to those who may not know him?

Do we know Jesus well enough to introduce him to others? Think of how awkward it can be to try to introduce someone to another person when we do not know that person well? We must challenge ourselves to know Jesus well enough to introduce him to others.

Fortunately, there is good news in the Bible for those who want to welcome "strangers". We all have had the experience at some point in our lives where we thought we knew someone but as we got to know them better, we found more reasons to love and like that person.

The good news is the Bible study offered at this church which gives us an opportunity to know Jesus better and to share the good news of his gift of salvation with others.

We can also participate in the life of the church so others can see what we do and thus be inspired to do more themselves. Example: Have you ever walked into a place and seen someone playing your favorite

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