

Howdy Stranger!

Never pass anyone on the trail without saying "Howdy!"

This little piece of advice is part of what some call the Cowboy Code. I like it because it reminds me that we are all strangers in many ways. For one thing, there are a lot more people on this planet that I don't know compared to the number I do know (umm... let's see, that would be about 6 billion compared to maybe a few hundred.) It's also easy to feel out of place, even when we are not far from home. Put *feeling out of place* alongside *feeling like you don't know anyone*, and you can see how the Cowboy Code is good advice: since we never know just what's going on with the people we see each day, it's a good idea not to pass them by without saying "Howdy!"

In this way we will also be able to remember that we are strangers here ourselves. As C.S. Lewis put it in *Mere Christianity*, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy; the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." Let's study together this week what it means for each of us – everyone who belongs to God – to be a stranger here on Earth.

Monday – Peter, an apostle

"There is no work better than to please God; to pour water, to wash dishes, to be a cobbler, or an apostle, all are one; to wash dishes and to preach are all one, as touching the deed, to please God." Wm. Tyndale

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:1-2. What type of authority is Peter exercising?

Text Insight – An Apostle was one who was selected by Jesus to establish and build the church. Peter was one of twelve apostles, each given dignity and authority to carry out their mission.

2. How did Peter first meet Jesus in John 1:35-42? What does this tell you about his Brother Andrew?

3. Biblical scholars think the events in Matthew 4:18-22 occurred after Peter and Jesus first met (as noted in John 1). What might have happened to prepare these four businessmen to leave their jobs when Jesus called?

Making it Personal: Like Peter, each of us has been called by Jesus. Consider the events that led up to his call upon your life. Are you fulfilling his call upon your life? Is there something you need to do to respond to Jesus' call with greater devotion and obedience?

Tuesday – Strangers

"I have become a stranger in a strange land." Moses, Exodus 2:22

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:1-2. What do the words "strangers" and "scattered" tell you?

2. In Psalm 120:5-7, what lament do you read from someone far from God's people? How might this translate into experiences you have in today's society?

Text Insight: Meshech was to the northwest of Jerusalem in present day Turkey, while Kedar was to the southeast in the deserts of Arabia. Both were far from home for the psalmist.

3. Read John 17:6 in conjunction with John 10:27-30. What assurances are there for God's people?

Prayer Focus: Do you ever feel like a stranger on earth? Ask God to give you wisdom as to how to live as a stranger, knowing that your true home is with him. Pray for Christians you know who are being tested to conform to the pattern of this world.

Wednesday – God's Chosen

"For many are invited, but few are chosen." Jesus, Matthew 22:14

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:1-2. What do the words "elect" and "chosen" tell you about your relationship to God?

2. Read Romans 8:28-30. Where does your relationship with God originate?

3. According to Ephesians 2:4-10, what is the motivating factor for a relationship with God? What is one of the purposes of that relationship as noted in verse 10? What are the good works of which Paul speaks?

Making it Personal: What good work(s) does Christ have for you today? Ask him to lead you and to give you an open heart to the opportunities he brings across your path.

Thursday – The Holy Spirit in You

"If you have not the Spirit of God, Christian worker, remember that you stand in somebody else's way; you are a fruitless tree standing where a fruitful tree might grow." Charles Spurgeon, 19th c. British preacher

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:1-2. What does the Holy Spirit do for God's chosen, the strangers in this world?

Text Insight: To sanctify means to set apart for a special purpose; in the context of the New Testament, it essentially means to become more like Jesus and to be his representative in the world.

2. What can you learn about the work of the Spirit from Galatians 5:16-26? How does that work affect or change people according to this passage?

3. How does Romans 8:26-27 comfort you regarding the role of the Spirit in your walk with God?

Making it Personal: Pray for God's Spirit to work in you to make you more like Jesus and to serve him.

Friday – Chosen to Obey, Chosen to Save

"Life is good, eternal life is better." Stellar Kart, album: *All Gas, No Brake* (2005)

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:1-2. What are your thoughts about God choosing you so that you can receive the benefit of Jesus' sacrifice ("sprinkling by his blood")?

2. How do Ephesians 2:10 and Romans 12:1 help you see what it means to be called to obey in 1 Peter 1:2?

Digging Deeper: Read Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 57:15 and Hebrews 11:6 and describe what pleases God.

For the Weekend: Read 1 Peter 1:1-2 and Hebrews 11:8-19. How did Abraham go about living as a stranger here on earth?