You Are Strangers, And My Guests

*Bible Study Sheet*

***Lesson Aim:*** To move toward a shared, Christ-centered and cruciform theology of evangelism for the local congregation.

**Introduction**

Sean McGever begins his book *Evangelism: For the Care of Souls* with psalmody and prayer[[1]](#footnote-1), using Psalm 51:15 and Psalm 96 in selected verses.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

O Lord, open my lips,

**And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.**

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!

**Sing to the LORD, all the earth.**

Sing to the LORD, bless His name;

**Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.**

Declare His glory among the nations,

**His wonders among all peoples.**

Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples,

**Give to the LORD glory and strength.**

Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns;

**The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously."**

God knows the use and repetition of simple words and phrases can have profound effect. He made them to have that kind of impact. A brief story, or a simple turn of phrase can immediately evoke a memory, provide an instant connection, or revive a long-forgotten thought. Since words can be used to such effect, this little Bible study will be set against the backdrop of memorable images and stories that our Lord Jesus had given us. It will also provide a handful of short, pithy phrases to introduce to the congregation.

Let’s look at some Scriptures, beginning with Psalm 122:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4:

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"*

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

Where do you find a source of words to express your faith? What might be some ways in which your personal faith is aligned with the faith once entrusted to the saints? See also 2 Timothy 1:13.

Phrase #1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How does this phrase set up an *expectation* for us? To which of the Ten Commandments does this expectation correspond? See also Hebrews 10:25. How does the use of this phrase set up an *anticipation* for us, and how does that relate to the *joy* mentioned in Psalm 122:1? See also Matthew 18:20.

*Read Mark 4:26-29.*

How do these agricultural images illustrate our *shared work* of evangelism?[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Plowing. (See James 1:19. Compare also John 3:7-8.)
* Planting. (See John 12:24 and Luke 8:11.)
* Watering**. (**See Isaiah 55:10-11.)
* Expectant Waiting. (Recall again Mark 4:26-29.)
* Harvesting. (See Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43; John 4:35-38.)

Phrase #2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What does this phrase suggest about what our attitude should be regarding our church and its people? Compare Galatians 6:10. Read also 2 Peter 2:4-6. What sins of ours does this expose to us? What comfort do you find there?

React to the following quote from Dr. Martin Luther:

We have no other reason for living on earth than to be of help to others. If this were not the case, it would be best for God to kill us and let us die as soon as we are baptized and have begun to believe. But he permits us to live here in order that we may bring others to faith, just as he brought us.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Dr. Mark Wood envisions outreach as a process that involves four steps[[4]](#footnote-4):

* Build Awareness.
* Create Connections.
* Nurture Relationships.
* Make Disciples.

Considering what Luther says above, and the cross-bearing that it implies, how many of the activities that take place in our congregation are for our members? How many things are intended to purposefully reach out to the lost (unchurched or de-churched[[5]](#footnote-5)) in our community? Are there more or other things that we *might* do, that we would also be willing and able to do? What cultural cues, both positive and negative, does our community provide?

Read the *Parable of the Sower,* Luke 8:4-15.

How does this parable help us in our spiritual need and in the case of our witness?

Who are we inclined to blame when we see how Christ and His word are rejected?

Dr. Wood asks the question:

“Why are non-churched people opposed to the church and deaf to the message we try to bring them?” And, “Why should you take risks to witness to such people?” [[6]](#footnote-6)

Consider these Scriptures:

*We love because he first loved us.* (1 John 4:19 ESV)

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.* (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 ESV)

Use these Bible verses to construct a prayer for the outreach efforts of your congregation, your pastor, and for yourself.

Phrase #3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How is this phrase different from “you’re going to love my pastor?” How does this different expectation help both pastor and people to adjust their expectations?

Compare what St. Paul writes, 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. How is this perspective both *the cross* to our pride, and at the same time a load lifted from us?

Phrase #4: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

As we consider the opportunities before us as a congregation, we do so with a view to these things: building awareness; creating a connection; nurturing relationships; all with a view to making disciples, in the manner that Christ gave to us, and with His promise in view, Matthew 28:18-20. With these things in mind, let’s consider what things we might and could do together.

**Conclusion**

Almighty God our Savior, you desire that none should perish, and you have taught us through your Son that there is great joy in heaven over every sinner who repents. Grant that our hearts may ache for a lost and broken world. May your Holy Spirit work through our words, deeds, and prayers, that the lost may be found and the dead be made alive, so that all your redeemed may rejoice eternally around your throne, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Bibliography

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1. McGever, p. xxi-xxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Wood, *Connected to Christ,* p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. LW 30:11. This citation provided by Prof. Erling Teigen and quoted by Pastor David Thompson in an unpublished paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf.: Wood, *Meaningful Outreach*, p. 47ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This can be a helpful distinction: the unchurched are those who have no connection to a Christian congregation. The de-churched are those who formerly had a connection but have lost or had it severed in one way or another. These together are nonchurched people, whom we are seeking to reach (rather than that we should compete with other churches for souls who are already “churchy.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Wood, Connected to Christ, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. McGever, p. xxiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)