



IMPACT MISSION CAMPS BIBLE STUDY 2017

Stranger Danger?

How can we welcome those who may not be always feel like they have a place?

Written by: Kristen Koger



Study 1: Who is a stranger?- Bible Edition

Objective: To gain an understanding of what the bible has to say about welcoming the stranger.

Focus verse: Matthew 25:35c: "...I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Supporting verses:

- Matthew 5:10
- Deuteronomy 10:19
- Exodus 23:9
- Leviticus 19:33-34
- Romans 12:13
- Hebrews 13:2

We will spend some time talking in this session about who is a stranger. The title of this Bible Study is slightly "tongue in cheek" based on how your students may define "stranger" and what their initial impression or definition may be. Tonight, we will unpack our own connotations about strangers, and start to move towards a larger understanding of this word. Over the next three studies leading up to Impact, we will attempt to place ourselves in the shoes of folks who may be considered "strangers among us" and then how we as followers of Christ can welcome them not just into our world, or our houses, but to our tables.

Let's talk a little bit about our initial thoughts when we hear the word stranger.

Who Are You?

Supplies: Large Post-it posters or a white board/chalkboard, markers

As you are ready to begin, write the word "STRANGER" on the large post-it note or the white board.

ASK: When you hear the word stranger, what do you think of? *Write down students' answers as they share them.*

Spend some time unpacking their answers. Ask some of the following questions if you need to encourage conversation.

When do you first remember hearing the word stranger?

In what context do you remember the word being used?

Have you ever encountered a stranger? What was that like? How did you feel?

Have you ever described someone as a "stranger?"

ASK: Can you think of any Bible passages that talk about strangers? *Write these down on a second post-it note or beside the "stranger" list.*

SAY: Let's open our Bibles and read our theme verse for Impact this summer.

Have students open Bible to Matthew 25:35-36. You will read the whole verse.

SAY: There are a lot of things that were charged with doing in these two verses. But we are going to focus on welcoming the stranger this year. Let's see where else in the Bible we are told to welcome strangers.

Small Group Discussion

Supplies: Bibles, Venn diagram printout, pen/pencil/marker for writing

Divide the students into 3 groups. Make sure each group has a Bible and a copy of the Venn diagram (found in the appendix). Assign each group a pair of passages. Have the students write the Old Testament passage in the left hand circle and the New Testament passage in the right hand circle. Students will read the verses together. Complete the Venn diagram by answering the questions on the sheet.

Group 1: Leviticus 19:33-34 and Matthew 5:10

Group 2: Deuteronomy 10:19 and Romans 12:13

Group 3: Exodus 23:9 and Hebrews 13:2

After the students have completed their work, have each group share what they found. Since the verses are short, have them read the verses before sharing their comparisons.

Large Group Discussion

Supplies: Post-it poster & markers or white board/chalk board & markers/chalk

Draw a large Venn diagram on the board.

ASK: What do the OT verses have in common? (write answers in left circle)

ASK: What do the NT verses have in common? (write answers in right circle)

ASK: What do they all have in common? (write in middle section)

ASK: How do you think Jesus and Paul wanted us to transition from the Old Testament way of thinking to the New Testament way of thinking?

Don't tell your students the answer, but encourage them to think about how the writers of the New Testament passage wanted their followers to take the next step. In the Old Testament passages, it is all about remembering where you came from. Sure, you need to treat strangers fairly; but the New Testament passages take it one step further in Romans and Hebrews by telling the reader to extend hospitality.

SAY: We will talk more about how we can do this in our third Bible Study. But over the next few weeks, I want you to pay attention to the ways that you encounter strangers in your life. Make note of them, because I will ask you about this when we gather together next week, and the week after.

ASK: Who are some people that you think you might see on a regular basis, in your everyday life, that could be considered a stranger? *(the quiet students at school, the cafeteria ladies, the homeless person standing on the corner, a senior adult who sits by himself or herself in worship every week).*

I also want you to make note about how you extend hospitality to them. You don't have to invite them to your house, or buy them a meal. But how can you show them that you see them, that you aren't just another person walking by ignoring them? *(answers can include saying hello, smiling at them, asking how their day is, sitting with them in worship, asking their name)*

PRAY: God, as we go through our daily lives, help us to see the people around us that may not be seen by others. Help us to find ways to show them that they matter, that they are loved, and that they belong. Give us the courage to find ways to step out of our comfort zones and welcome them into our world, even if only for a brief moment. It is in the name of your son, the one who welcomed all who crossed his path, that we pray, Amen.

Study 2: The Refugee Experience

Objective: To focus in on the experience of those who are political refugees, and what they have gone through in their home countries, and what it is like when they arrive in the United States.

Introduction

Supplies: None

SAY: Tonight, we are going to attempt to put ourselves in the shoes of some folks that we may consider strangers. We are going to hopefully step out of our comfort zones, and into their world for just a moment, in an attempt to better understand their reality. Hopefully, this will help us as we try to find ways to welcome them into our lives, including our houses and our tables.

Most of the information from this bible study was provided by an organization called ReEstablish Richmond. This is an organization that was founded in 2010 by a man named Patrick Braford. Patrick's church had recently welcomed a group of refugees from the country of Burma, now called Myanmar. Through the church's ministry of helping these folks settle into their new life, Patrick realized that there was a gap in Richmond's services for refugees. There are government programs that are assigned to families when they arrive in the US, but many times, these programs did not provide adequate support or have enough resources for the families they were assisting. As the organization has grown, the services that are provided have changed over the years. They now work with refugees from over 8 countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Bhutan, Burma, Sudan, Syria, Congo, Iran). But their focus of helping the newest members of Richmond has never changed.

You can visit www.reestablishrichmond.org for more information on this organization.

ASK: Have any of you ever met a refugee? *(allow answers)* Have any of you ever been to a country where you did not speak the language or did not know the culture? *(allow answers, and for students to share where they have gone)*

What is a refugee?

Supplies: Post-it poster/markers or white/chalk board

Write "Refugee" on the top of the paper

ASK: When you hear the word refugee, what words come to mind? *Write your students' answers on the paper. A word of caution here- due to the intense and divisive political climate in our country right now, your students may have some interesting answers. Try to keep them focused on the question at hand, without going down a rabbit trail if anything political is brought up. There is a time and place to have those conversations, but that is not the purpose of this Bible Study.*

ASK: Do you know the difference between a refugee and an immigrant? *Again, be careful about how you allow students to answer. We want their voice to be heard, but also want them to learn facts about these two groups of people.*

SAY: An immigrant is someone who has chosen to move to another country. A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her home country. A refugee has suffered human rights abuses, or is being persecuted because of something they believe in. Their own government cannot or will not protect them and so they are forced to seek international protection. In 1951, the United Nations Refugee Convention protected refugees from being returned to countries where they risk persecution.

WRITE: *On a post-it paper/white board, write down these numbers in a column:*

26

116,000

2,000

Have your students guess what these numbers represent. There are no right or wrong answers. After a couple of minutes, fill them in on the correct answers

26 countries in the world have a legal obligation to resettle refugees

116,999 refugees came to the United States in 2016

2,000 refugees resettled in Virginia in 2013

Imagine Exercise

Supplies: a piece of paper and writing instrument for each student, a watch/stop watch to keep time

SAY: I would like for you to close your eyes and imagine the scenario that I am going to describe to you. I will ask you to write some things down when I am done.

Imagine: It's a Wednesday morning, just like every other Wednesday morning. You've gotten out of bed, into your school clothes, and you are searching for breakfast in the kitchen... Ok, it's pop tarts. Again. There is never anything in the house that you want! You help your younger siblings get their breakfast too. You leave a note for your mom and dad that you love them. They were up before the sun was this morning so they could go to work at the factory. You hope your dad can pick up some chicken for dinner! You are tired of eating beans and canned vegetables. Maybe tonight your whole family can sit down for dinner

You're out the door and walking to the bus stop with your younger siblings. You can feel the ground move a bit, meaning something diesel this way comes. You think "Another morning running to catch the bus?" and make a mental note to change back the alarm clocks a few minutes. You look up ahead to see the bus emerge from a dusty cloud.

But something's wrong. That's not the bus. Up ahead you see a truck filled with militia – rogue men with guns. You see your classmates being shoved onto the truck and you can hear them screaming in terror and confusion. There's no time to think- you and your siblings duck in between two of the houses, into the alley and through your own backyard. You peek through the blinds to see that they haven't stopped with the kids at the bus stop. They're coming up the block kicking down doors to your neighbors' houses. You have no choice but to make a run for it.

Now open your eyes. You have 45 seconds to grab everything you'll need from your house. Write it down on your paper. Go!

After 45 seconds, SAY: Stop!

Discussion: *Divide the students up into small groups (2-4 per group). Have them share what they grabbed and why. Then, have the small groups take their individual lists and make 1 group list, with only 5 things that they wrote on their individual lists.*

SHARE: *On a post-it poster, have each small group share their list. If an item is duplicated, just place a check beside it for each duplication. Once you have your master list from all the groups, your large group must decide on 7 things (10 if you have no duplicates) they would take with them. Take no more than 4 minutes for this activity. If your group is unsuccessful, that is okay. It is hard to come up with this list.*

SAY: Sometimes, this is what happens for those who are having to flee their homes. They don't always have

time to pack a bag with all the important things, or the sentimental things. There are people who live with a packed bag in case they have to leave quickly, but sometimes there is no warning that you will need to flee for safety.

ASK: How do you think that would make you feel? If you never knew what was going to happen on your way to school, or work, or to your friend's house?

Personal Testimony

Supplies: Projector, screen (or blank wall), computer, sound

SAY: We are going to watch the testimony of a man named Samuel Lian. Samuel is a student at Virginia Commonwealth University. He was a refugee from the country of Burma, but is now a United States citizen. This is his story.

Play this video.

<https://vimeo.com/70299826>

ASK: What did you think of Samuel's story? What jumped out at you about his story? How do you think you would feel if you went through what Samuel went through?

SAY: On top of having to flee his home country, Samuel and his parents also moved to the United States in 2009 when Samuel was 16. He had to start taking classes at an American high school. Imagine being put into a United States history class, when you don't know anything about the United States. Or having to take a biology class, where there are test tubes and beakers and frogs to be dissected, when your last school had very few textbooks, let alone other supplies.

ASK: What do you think are the hardest things to adjust to as a stranger to the United States? What is the hardest part about moving to America? SAY: Samuel and his family were lucky that they had a church that could help and support them. And they were lucky that they spoke English fairly well when they arrived. And that they were Christians and people did not question why they were here. But imagine what it must be like for people who don't speak or read English, and have no support system. We all know the America that is great and wonderful (at least most of the time). But for someone who has not grown up here, it can be very scary to come to a place by yourself, or even with your family for the first time.

SAY: Next week, we will learn about how we can continue to welcome the stranger into our lives.

PRAY: God, we give thanks for organizations like ReEstablish Richmond and the many others that help refugees coming to America. We pray for all of those who are being persecuted for something they believe in. Help us to find ways to welcome them into our country, and our lives. Amen.

Study 3: Welcome. Come in. Sit down.

Objective: To find ways we can be hospitable to the stranger, and not just welcome them into our lives, but to our tables as well.

SAY: For the past two sessions we have been working on understanding what it is like to be a stranger in a foreign land. We looked at what the Bible has to say about this topic, and how both the Old and New Testaments tell us that we should welcome strangers because our biblical ancestors were once strangers in a foreign land. We have heard just one example of a story about a refugee who came to America as a child. We have tried to imagine what it would be like to have to suddenly leave your home and everything you knew.

In this session, we are going to think about how we can take the next step and offer hospitality to the strangers in our lives. These do not have to be people who come from another country. Remember, we have talked about the strangers that are in our own communities at school or at church.

ASK: Who are the strangers that you can think of in your life? (*allow students to answer*) How do you think we will encounter strangers at Impact this summer? (*allow students to answer*)

SAY: Sure, there will be lots of people at Impact that we may not know. Other youth groups, people in the houses we are working on, people in the community we are visiting, and Impact staff. How can we over the course of the week find ways to reach out to these “strangers?”

Video Clip

Supplies: Computer, projector, screen (or blank wall), sound, balloons with questions below written on them

Play this clip.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHV4-N2LxQ>

Before your students arrive, blow up some balloons and write the following questions on them. After watching the clip, have the group make a circle. Go around the circle, and let each student choose a balloon and answer the question on it.

- *Name 3 things on your bucket list*
- *Name someone who is an inspiration to you.*
- *What is the first thing you remember wanting to be when you grew up?*
- *What is the bravest thing you have ever done?*
- *What would you like to do if you had no fear?*

SAY: In the video clip, complete strangers were able to find something they had in common with each other. Did you learn something new about one of our youth group members today? We see each other all the time! There is no way that we can know everything about someone, especially if we are just meeting them for the first time. Next, we will do an activity that will hopefully encourage us to step out of our comfort zones and welcome others that we don't know at all.

Small Group activity

Supplies: case studies/role playing cards (found at end of lesson)

Divide the students into 3 groups. Each group will receive one of the case studies/role playing cards. Tell each group to have someone read the card out loud. They will then need to create a scene acting out what is on the card. Give the groups 10 minutes to create their scene. Then they will share with the group. But here's the trick- they must do this silently when they share.

Group 1: student sitting by themselves in church Fellowship Hall

Group 2: homeowner (widow, no children, elderly)

Group 3: student on mission site who is afraid of heights

Have each group share their scene. Let them act the whole thing out before you have the other 2 groups guess what they are doing. Once each group has done their scene and shared how they are going to welcome the stranger, let the larger group share any ideas they have that are different.

Bible Reading

Supplies: copies of scripture reading for 6 people (found at end of lesson)

Jesus: Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who have been invited

Slave: Come, for everything is ready.

Jesus: But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him,

First guest: I have bought a piece of land and I must go out and see it. Please accept my regrets.

Jesus: Another said

Second Guest: I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going to try them out. Please accept my regrets.

Jesus: Another said

Third guest: I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.

Jesus: So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became very angry and said to his slave

Master: Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

Jesus: And the slave said

Slave: Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.

Jesus: Then the master said to the slave

Master: Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in so that my house may be filled.”

Discussion

As a group, ask and discuss these questions.

- How did the final guest list look different from the original guest list?
- In Jesus' time, only certain types of people were invited to banquet tables. Who do you think would have normally been invited to the banquet?
- How did Jesus “turn the tables” and invite in the stranger through this parable?
- What else do you think the banquet table can represent?
- In the Scripture passages we read a couple of weeks ago, we are reminded that we should welcome the stranger because we were once strangers. We are also the chosen ones of God. How does this parable teach us about who is invited to the table, and to the kingdom of God?
- Has there ever been a time when you did not feel welcomed? How did that make you feel?
- When have you felt like the stranger, and someone welcomed you in?
- Who are some people that you think would not be welcomed into your circle? Or our circle? Why?

- What are some ways we can make others feel more welcome in our youth group? In our church? In the Kingdom of God?

SAY: There are times when we don't even realize how we are welcoming strangers into our world. But there are also times when we don't realize that we are ignoring strangers. I hope that now you will be able to be a little more willing to reach out.

Yarn Toss

Supplies: ball of yarn

Have the group make a circle. Give the yarn to one person, and have them hold onto the end of the yarn. The student will then throw it to another student in the circle. As they throw it, they will share a way that student has made them feel welcome. Encourage them to be specific and not may general statement.

Prayer

With the giant web still intact, spend a minute discussing how we all have a place in helping others feel welcomed. And this helps us build a stronger community. Close in a word of prayer, with everyone still holding onto their string. Ask one student to open in prayer, and then leave some time in the middle for students to add their own prayers. Then you will close.

Study 4: Now what? (TO BE COMPLETED AFTER YOUR WEEK OF IMPACT)

Objective: To take what we saw at Impact and find ways to put it into action in our own communities.

Did You Chop Down this Tree?

Supplies: computer, projector, screen (or blank wall), sound

WATCH: This clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nNgHSJNbEE> with your group.

ASK:

- What was the Lorax responsible for? Why do you think he kept standing up for the trees and animals even though the Once-ler seemed unstoppable?
- How did the Lorax and the Once-ler use their power in different ways?
- We are all powerful, all capable of “doing something,” so how does that place responsibility on each of us?
- What are we “speaking” for?

SAY: We see throughout Jesus’ lifetime, the example for how we are to live. Jesus is constantly loving others. He is healing and caring for others; he leads people back when they have strayed; he sits at tables with people that no one else likes or wants to sit with. They don’t even want Jesus to be sitting with them.

At Impact, we learned not only do we have to welcome the stranger, but we have to invite them to the table, and continue to make the table wider. The table is a metaphor for the communities that we are a part of - our youth group, our church, our school, our family, our neighborhood. There are people in each of these places that need us to stand up and speak up for them. Jesus shows us how to respond, to speak for justice, to stand by God. But we have to respond with love.

ASK: How can we be responsible as Christians so that our expressions of faith help build and foster the Kingdom as God envisioned it?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Supplies: Long piece of butcher paper, markers (one per student), quiet music for background

Roll the butcher paper out, either on a long table or on the floor. You want students to be able to gather around on both sides of the paper

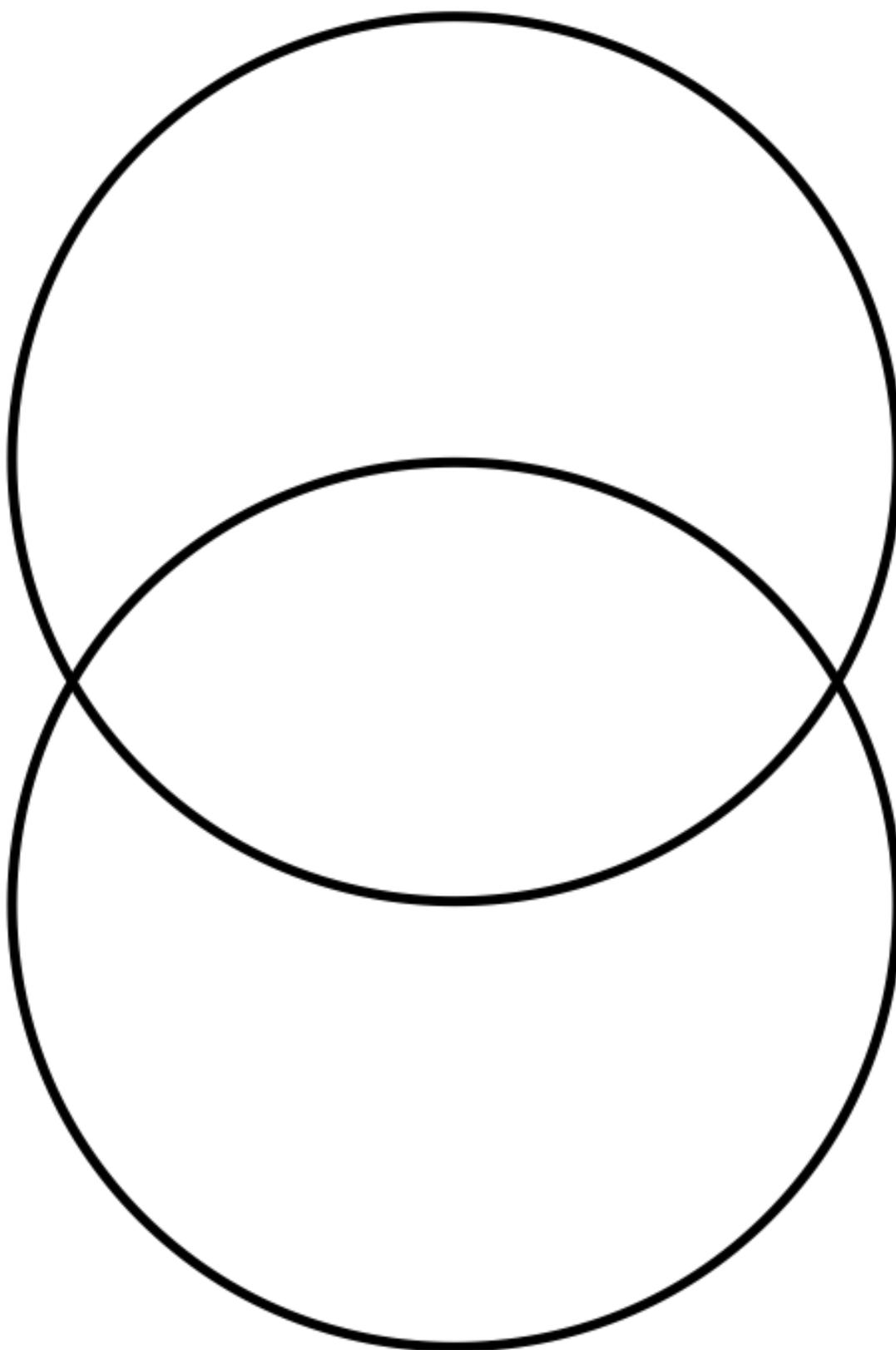
SAY: Tonight, we are going to build on each other’s prayers. You will write down something- a name, a situation, a word that represents how they can live a more responsible and faithful life. They could also draw something to represent this. (For example, it may be the name of someone they want to help or feel they need to show love to. Another example would be something they want to stand up on the side of or against, such as speaking out against bullying.) Then, the whole group will rotate one space to the right. They will read the name/situation/etc and write or draw a prayer for that person. Continue to rotate so that each prayer is built on. You could have them move 2 or 3 spaces at a time, depending on the number of kids and how much time you have and how much space is on the paper. Have the students return to their original spot, spending a few moments reading the prayers they have written.

Close in prayer with the group, praying over the prayers that have been written.

BIBLE STUDY APPENDIX

New Testament Passage:

Old Testament Passage:



What is unique about the Old Testament passage?
What is unique about the New Testament passage?
What do the two passages have in common?

Group 1:

Instructions: Have someone in your group read the scene below. Make sure everyone can hear the story. Once it has been read, your group needs to work together to recreate the scene. because you will be sharing this with the large group. You will share what is happening in the scene, and then how you will welcome the “stranger” in the story. But here is the trick- you will have to do it silently! You may use props found in your area to make the scene, or use your group members as props (have someone be a table, or a chair, or make the outline of a house with 2 people). Get creative! The larger group will try to guess what is happening in your scene.

Scene: You have just returned from you mission site for the day. You go to the church Fellowship Hall for dinner. You spot some friends from you church group, and sit down at their table. After a few minutes, you notice that someone from another church also sat down at your table. But they are sitting far away, by themselves. How can you welcome the stranger?

Group 2:

Instructions: Have someone in your group read the scene below. Make sure everyone can hear the story. Once it has been read, your group needs to work together to recreate the scene. because you will be sharing this with the large group. You will share what is happening in the scene, and then how you will welcome the “stranger” in the story. But here is the trick- you will have to do it silently! You may use props found in your area to make the scene, or use your group members as props (have someone be a table, or a chair, or make the outline of a house with 2 people). Get creative! The larger group will try to guess what is happening in your scene.

Scene: It is your third day on your mission site. You are working at the home of Mr. Jenkins. Your group met him the first day when you arrived. He said hello and said you could come in if you needed to at any point during the week. But all you know about him is that his wife died two years ago, and he does not have any children. You have not seen him come outside all week, but sometimes you see him looking out the window. You go home tomorrow. How can you welcome the stranger?

Group 3:

Instructions: Have someone in your group read the scene below. Make sure everyone can hear the story. Once it has been read, your group needs to work together to recreate the scene. because you will be sharing this with the large group. You will share what is happening in the scene, and then how you will welcome the “stranger” in the story. But here is the trick- you will have to do it silently! You may use props found in your area to make the scene, or use your group members as props (have someone be a table, or a chair, or make the outline of a house with 2 people). Get creative! The larger group will try to guess what is happening in your scene.

Scene: It is your second day on the mission site. You are putting a new roof on a house. Everyone is excited because today the group is pulling off the shingles. You are the first one up on the roof in the morning. All day there are people going up and down off the roof. Your crew leader told you that everyone needs to take turns being on the roof or being on the ground cleaning up the shingles. After lunch, you are told that you have to stay on the group. One of your crew members is asked if he wants to get on the roof. He says “No thanks. I’ll stay down here on the ground.” You notice over the next half hour that he is always working by himself. How can you welcome the stranger?

Jesus: Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who have been invited

Slave: Come, for everything is ready.

Jesus: But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him,

First guest: I have bought a piece of land and I must go out and see it. Please accept my regrets.

Jesus: Another said

Second Guest: I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going to try them out. Please accept my regrets.

Jesus: Another said

Third guest: I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.

Jesus: So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became very angry and said to his slave

Master: Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

Jesus: And the slave said

Slave: Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.

Jesus: Then the master said to the slave

Master: Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in so that my house may be filled.”