

Adult Study Guide for March 14, 2021
Series: *I am an Alien*; Message: *Resident Exiles*

Goal: To take up our cross and be faithful to God in our politics and life together.

Key Verse: *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 2:12 (NIV)

1. Read 1 Peter 2:11. The word Greek word for *aliens* refers to people living in a place that is not their true home, and the word for *strangers* describes a visitor staying briefly in a foreign land. An alien invasion that needs to be repulsed by force is a favorite theme of science fiction books and movies. What makes aliens so scary? In what ways is living the Christian faith always countercultural? What war are we fighting? (Ephesians 6:10-12)
2. Read the key verse above and Matthew 5:14-16. The first readers of Peter's letter had no political power and were scattered among unbelieving Gentiles who were inclined to spread vicious lies about Christians. How can the way we respond to criticism combat the false accusations made against us? What is the goal of our good behavior? What is its source? (Matthew 7:17-18; Ephesians 2:10)
3. Read John 15:19 and John 17:14-16. How did Jesus describe this tension between conformity to this world and withdrawal from society? How does the concept of being *resident exiles* help us put into perspective our loss of social privilege and political influence? How does our eternal home help us put this life in perspective?
4. Read 1 Peter 2:13-17. Peter says that the Church should focus on growing a spiritual community internally that declares the virtues of God outwardly – to show respect for the authority of human government while maintaining our freedom in Christ by fearing God and loving one another. Give some examples of how these verses might be lived out in practical experience.
5. Read Romans 13:1-10. Legislation may impact what people do but cannot force people to change what they believe. Why do both Peter and Paul urge us to submit to our governing authorities? How can we show love for our neighbors and achieve a biblical vision of justice?
6. Read Matthew 16:24-27. What are disciples of Jesus called to do? How does this command of Jesus affect the way we relate to those who have political power? How can the cross help us avoid partisan divisions in the church and in conversations with our neighbors?