

## What is a Sojourner in the Bible?

The term *sojourner* in the Bible refers to a person who is just passing through. Synonyms in various translations are *foreigner*, *exile*, and *alien*. During the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were sojourners in the wilderness (Psalm 105:12–13; 1 Chronicles 16:19). Even though they remained in the wilderness for forty years, it was not their home (Numbers 14:33–34). They were merely sojourners there, yearning for the Promised Land God would give them for a permanent home.

Abraham was a sojourner in Egypt when a famine swept the Promised Land (Genesis 12:10). Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus were also sojourners in Egypt when Herod sought to kill Him (Matthew 2:13–15). And the apostle Paul sojourned from region to region, starting churches and preaching the gospel (Acts 13:1–3, 13–14, 51). All of these people lived for a short time in foreign places.

Peter wrote his first letter “to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1, ASV). Other versions have “exiles,” “foreigners,” “strangers,” or “refugees.” The recipients of 1 Peter were persecuted Christian Jews who had been forced to leave Jerusalem and were now residing in what we would call Asia Minor. In the next chapter, Peter’s use of the term *sojourners* takes on a more spiritual connotation: “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

Peter’s appeal for holiness was based on the identity of his readers. They were Christians, bought by the blood of Jesus and made joint heirs with Him for eternity (Romans 8:17). They were not citizens of this world, only sojourners in it. They were not to

adopt its customs or embrace its worldview (Romans 12:1–2). As sojourners, Christians must exemplify the values and standards of their permanent home, heaven. Paul reiterates that theme in Philippians 3:20, reminding the church that “our citizenship is in heaven.” We are sojourners here, ambassadors for our Father, the King (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This world is not our home. The knowledge that we are sojourners on this earth keeps us from setting our hearts on its treasures. Jesus warned us that this world’s treasures are subject to loss. Therefore, we must store up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19–20). We are to hold all God gives us with open hands, knowing that any earthly gain is only temporary. Sojourners don’t put down deep roots in the places where they reside because they know they will soon move on. Likewise, Christians don’t pour their hearts and passions into things that won’t last. The wise Christian is one who lives every day with bags packed, ready to move on when God directs and eager to vacate this world when our Father calls us home. *From GotQuestions.org*