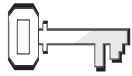


Safe At Last!



References

Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; Joshua 20; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 515-517



Memory Verse

“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2, NIV).



Objectives

The children will:
Know that church is a place of refuge where people worship together.
Feel safe and cherished in God’s house.

Respond by planning and practicing ways that they can take part in their church family’s worship.



The Message

Church is a place of refuge where we worship together.

Monthly Theme

We worship God every day.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

When an Israelite accidentally kills someone, he runs to a city of refuge. There he is safe until a judge determines if the incident truly was an accident. If proven innocent, the fugitive must remain within the city’s walls until the death of the high priest. If he leaves the city, he is in danger of death from his avenger. If he remains inside, he is safe.

This is a lesson about worship.

The cities of refuge symbolize the refuge from eternal death provided in Christ. His church is His body, so it provides this benefit of refuge on His behalf. A natural result of enjoying refuge from eternal death is praise and worship of the One who affords it. Thus Christ’s appointed place of refuge—the church—will ring with adoration and worship.

Teacher Enrichment

“The cities of refuge were so distributed as to be within a half day’s journey of every part of the land. The roads leading to them were always to be kept in good repair; all along the way signposts were to be erected bearing the word *Refuge* in plain, bold characters, that the fleeing one might not be delayed for a moment. Any person—Hebrew, stranger, or sojourner—might avail himself of this provision. . . .

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. . . . No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 515, 516).

Room Decorations

See Lesson 9.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	<i>A. Last Touch</i> <i>B. Lawsuit</i>	a sheet, blanket, or rug; Bible a tape or CD player and lively Christian music, Bible
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> container used last week paper, pencils
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	Bible Bible Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Building a Safe Church</i>	newsprint or banner paper; pencil; gray, beige, brown, red, and orange construction paper or plain brown paper; markers, glue, scissors
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Advertising the Refuge</i>	helium or regular balloons, string, papers with church address and phone number

***Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.**

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Give directions for the Readiness Activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- a sheet, blanket, or rug
- Bible

A. Last Touch

This game is much like tag. Choose a child to be “it” and explain the safe place or “base” where children are safe from being tagged by “it.” “Base” can be a rug or mat, or a place, such as a blanket over a table. “It” tries to touch another child, who will then become “it.” The other children can avoid being touched by “it” if they are inside the “base” or by moving out of “its” way. Continue for 5 minutes or so. Try to make sure everyone has a chance to be involved.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel being “it”?** (OK, bad, good) **How did it feel trying to get away from “it”?** (fun, silly etc.) **Did you like having a safe place where you could go?** (yes, maybe) **Do you have any safe places in your life?** (yes, no, don’t know) Read aloud Proverbs 18:10. **Where is our refuge, our safe place?** (God, the Lord, Jesus; also: home, school if God is there, and church) **Today’s message is:**



CHURCH IS A PLACE OF REFUGE WHERE WE WORSHIP TOGETHER.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- a tape or CD player
- lively Christian music
- Bible

B. Lawsuit

Play some lively Christian music while the children march around the room to it. The children are not permitted to touch or even bump into each other. Any student who touches another has to go to “base” for 30 seconds, before being able to rejoin the game. Mark off the area in which they can march and keep making it smaller.

Debriefing

Say: **Was it hard to keep from touching each other? How did you feel about knowing you could serve your time and then come and play the game again?**

In the Bible, a city of refuge was a place where people got another chance.

Who got another chance in the game we just played? (People who went to base.)

Read aloud Proverbs 18:10. **How is our church like a city of refuge?** (It’s for everyone; we feel safe there; it is a refuge to save people from sin.) **Have you thanked**

Jesus for giving you your very own church? (Wait for answers.) **When you worship in church remember that:**



CHURCH IS A PLACE OF REFUGE WHERE WE WORSHIP TOGETHER.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise

Any
Time



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "I Was Glad" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 144)
- "We Are the Church" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 141)
- "The Family of God" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 139)
- "This Is God's House" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 145)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Help the children listen for a safe place—a refuge—in the story.



Offering

Our offering goes to help others learn of God and to welcome them to His place of refuge on earth—the church. There they will learn about the safest place of all—God's home in heaven.

You Need:

- container used last week



Prayer

Form prayer groups of 4-5 children. Give each group paper and pencil. Each group lists names of people for special prayer. Have each group hold hands, make a circle, place their paper in the middle of their circle, then pray for the people listed on the paper. Say: **The circle of prayer around the names reminds us that these people can find a refuge in the prayers of the church. Remember, praying is worshiping.**

You Need:

- paper and pencils

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- Bible

Experiencing the Story

Involve the children in an interactive story by having them respond when you say certain words.

When you say . . . They respond with . . .

accident "Oh, no!"
city of refuge "You'll be safe there!"
run, running, ran "Hurry, Jared!"

Read or tell the story.

Jared was in trouble. It was an **accident**, ["Oh, no!"] and he hadn't meant for it to happen, but he was still in trouble.

You see, Jared was helping a friend build his house. They had gone into the woods to chop down trees for wood. They were working hard, swinging their axes against the tree trunks, when suddenly, an **accident** ["Oh, no!"] happened! The axe head flew off Jared's axe and hit his neighbor in the head. His neighbor let out a cry, grabbed his head, and fell to the ground. Jared dropped his axe and ran to help his neighbor, but the man wasn't breathing. Jared could tell that his neighbor was dead.

What would Jared do? It had been an **accident** ["Oh, no!"]. He hadn't meant to hurt his neighbor. But if his neighbor's relatives caught Jared, they could take his life! A life for a life. It was the law in those days.

A million thoughts swirled through Jared's head. Within a few hours they would be missed. Someone would come looking for them—for him!

But then Jared remembered! The **city of refuge**! ["You'll be safe there!"] Yes! Before Moses died he had planned for **cities of refuge** ["You'll be safe there!"], according to God's plan. There were six

of them in Israel, each one no more than half a day's journey from anywhere else.

The **city of refuge** ["You'll be safe there!"] was a place where a person could **run** ["Hurry, Jared!"] in case of an **accident** ["Oh, no!"], like this. There he would be safe. Safe until a trial would prove that it had been an **accident** ["Oh, no!"]. Jared would have to live there until the high priest died, and if that didn't happen, he would have to live there for the rest of his life. But at least he would be safe. Yes! The **city of refuge**! ["You'll be safe there!"] Jared had to get there—quickly.

Jared jumped up and started to **run** ["Hurry, Jared!"]. He knew right where to go. The roads to the **city of refuge** ["You'll be safe there!"] were kept in good repair. And the way was plainly marked by sign posts. He had not thought much about the signs until now—until his own life depended on it.

On and on he **ran** ["Hurry, Jared!"]. He didn't dare stop to rest. His neighbor's closest relative would be after him. Oh, where was the **city of refuge** ["You'll be safe there!"] anyway? Surely, he must be getting close.

There it was! Jared could see the walls of the city just over a rise in the road ahead. But he must not slow down. His chest hurt. Was that the sound of footsteps behind him? He had to keep **running** ["Hurry, Jared!"]

What was that he saw ahead? The elders of the **city of refuge** ["You'll be safe there!"]. They had seen him coming! They were opening the city gates for him. Just a little ways to go! Keep **running**! ["Hurry, Jared!"]

Just 50 more yards (meters), 20, 10, 5. He was inside! Jared collapsed, out of breath, as he heard the gates close behind him. He was safe!

Debriefing

Ask: **How did you feel when Jared finally arrived inside the city of refuge?** (relieved) **Who is chasing us every day?** **Let's read 1 Peter 5:8 together.** (The devil is going around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.)

What place does God want to be a refuge for us? A place that drives Satan away from us. (His church) **What can we do to make our church a safe place?** (Accept each other, care about each other, pray for each other, etc.) **Let's say our message together:**



CHURCH IS A PLACE OF REFUGE WHERE WE WORSHIP TOGETHER.

Memory Verse

Read the memory verse. Ask a series of questions that the children can answer with part of the memory verse; use motions as follows (see margin):

You Need:
• Bible

WHERE? "In my Father's house (Make an inverted V with hands, palms together and fingertips touching.)

ARE WHAT? are many rooms; (Show rectangular spaces with hands.)

HOW DO YOU KNOW? if it were not so, I would have told you. (Shake head; cup hand to mouth.)

SO WHAT? I am going there. (Arms make a forward, sweeping movement.)

WHY? to prepare a place for you." (hands building on each other)

WHERE IN THE BIBLE? John 14:2, NIV. Now say John 14:1-3 together.

Be sure the children know that Jesus made this promise for all of them and their families.

Bible Study

Say: **The cities of refuge remind us that God provides a refuge for us in our daily lives and in church. Let's**

read about that in our Bibles.

Have adult helpers assist as needed. Have all the children find the same verse. Have the verses read aloud.

Deuteronomy 33:27 2 Samuel 22:2, 3
Psalm 5:11 Psalm 16:1
Psalm 46:10 Nahum 1:7

Debriefing

Ask: **Do you ever feel that you don't know what to do? What do these verses tell you to do about that? We need never feel alone. Why? Because ...**



CHURCH IS A PLACE OF REFUGE WHERE WE WORSHIP TOGETHER.

"Because of Dogs" (Optional Story)

Eighteen-year-old Ellie Arcaya was returning home from school. Suddenly two stray dogs ran out from behind some trees, barking fiercely. The young woman knew these dogs might bite her. With nothing to defend herself, she ran toward a nearby open gate. Quickly she slipped through a door to escape the dogs. She found herself inside a church where a meeting was taking place.

Fearful to leave the church because of the dogs outside, she sat down in the last row to catch her breath. Since she was there, she felt it would be rude not to listen to the speaker. She had never heard the Bible explained so clearly before, and she decided to return the following night.

Ellie continued to attend the evening meetings. Soon she gave her life to Jesus and requested baptism.

Just as Ellie had fled the fierce dogs, many people are fleeing the enemy of souls. Will they find a safe refuge in your church?

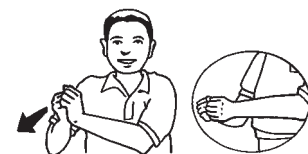
(Adapted from Omar Paño, *Sabbath School Adult Bible Study Guide*, July, August, September, 2000, p. 87.)



"In my Father's house are many rooms;



if it were not so, I would have told you.



I am going there



to prepare a place for you.

3

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- newsprint or banner paper
- a pencil
- gray, beige, brown, red, and orange construction paper or plain brown paper cut to size
- markers
- glue
- scissors
- felt or picture of Jesus (optional)

Building a Safe Church

Before Sabbath School, cover one wall or the outside of the door to your room with newsprint or banner paper. On the paper, outline a large church.

In class, divide the children into groups (small church: have them work alone). Ask: Who or what at our church has made you feel safe? (Adults at the door to help; teachers who take good care of you; people who like you; teachers who tell about Jesus.)

Together we are going to build a church of refuge or safety. You can make more than one building block. On a sheet of paper, write a name or draw a picture of someone who makes you feel safe at church. When you are done, sign your block and come glue it to the church outline on the wall (or door).

Take 10 minutes. Adults who choose to make a building block, must describe

what people do to make church safe for children. When time is up, add some blank blocks to fill up the outline. The children can write in these after class, if they wish.

Debriefing

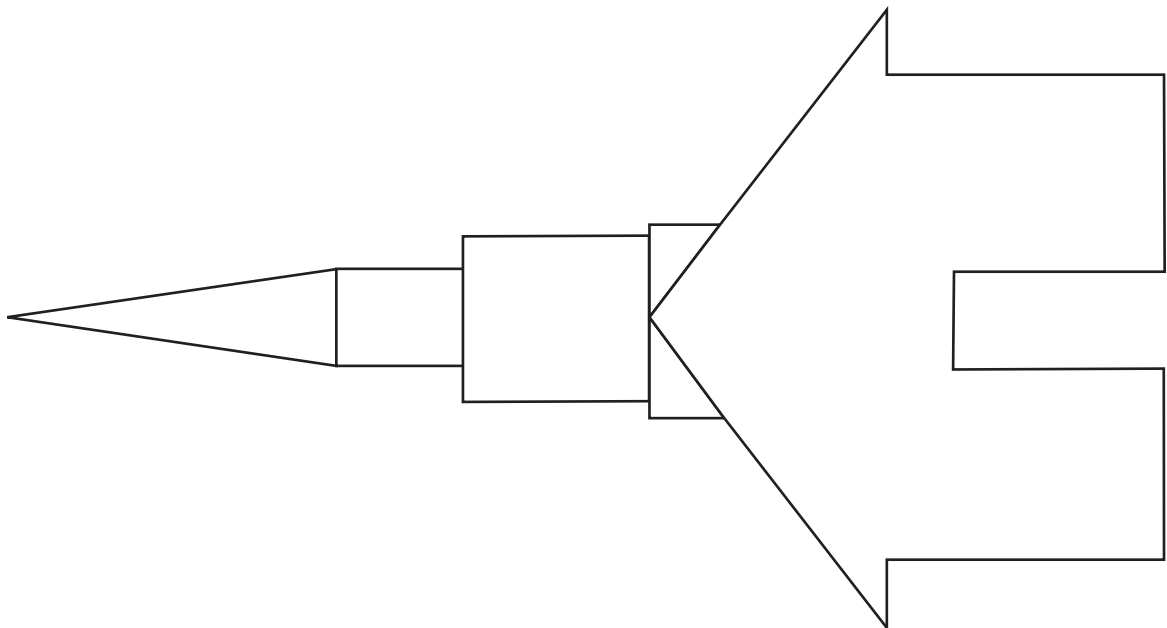
Think about all those people who help to make our church safe. Why do they want to make it safe? (Accept answers.) **I think love for Jesus makes them want us to feel safe when we worship together.**

(Option: Tape a felt Jesus to the center of your church.)

In some countries people cannot worship Jesus in safety. Let's thank God that church is a safe place for us to worship together. (In countries without religious freedom, pray for safety.) Ask three people to pray. Then say today's message together:



CHURCH IS A PLACE OF REFUGE WHERE WE WORSHIP TOGETHER.



4

Sharing the Lesson

Advertising the Refuge

Say: **We can share with our neighborhood the good news that God and His church are a refuge.**

Here is one way to do it: We will write Bible promises on the pieces of paper that have our church address (or use promises already written on slips of paper). **Then we will tie them to these balloons and take them outside to let them go. Whoever finds them will receive these promises.** Suggested Bible promises:

You are God's child (1 John 3:1).

God is love (1 John 4:8).

Trouble? God will help (1 Peter 5:7).

Scared? God is our refuge (Psalm 16:1; 46:1).

Worship our God, for we are under His care (Psalm 95:6, 7).

Take the children outside to release the helium-filled balloons. (If helium-filled balloons are not available, tie the Bible promises to regular balloons and have the children personally deliver one to someone later.)

Debriefing

Before going outside with the balloons, ask: **Why do you want others to know about your church and God?** (Because church is a refuge for people, and worshiping God there will make them happier in life.)

How would you feel if you found or received one of the balloons that we prepared? (happy, surprised, curious) **Let's pray that these balloons will help someone to find God, and that they will someday worship Him.** Pray together, then say: **Remember,**



CHURCH IS A PLACE OF REFUGE WHERE WE WORSHIP TOGETHER.

Closing

Have the children stand in a circle. Leave a gap in the circle so others could join. Say: **We enjoy coming together to worship God. When we come to church, we can get away from our problems.**

There is room in our circle for more to join us. Think of someone who doesn't know that the church is a place of refuge and pray for them right now. End with a prayer thanking God for the refuge of the church.

You Need:

- helium or regular balloons (one for each child)
- string
- papers with church address and phone number

Safe At Last!

References

Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; Joshua 20; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 515-517

Memory Verse

“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2, NIV).

The Message

Church is a place of refuge where we worship together.

Maria was in trouble. Big trouble. She had accidentally dropped a whole box of eggs. What a mess! Well, there was nothing else to do. She had to tell her mother—and clean up the floor.

“It was an accident, Mom,” she began. “I didn’t mean to drop the eggs. Honest, I didn’t.”

“I know that, Maria,” responded her mother. “I’m just glad it happened in the kitchen where the floor can be cleaned easily.”

Sometimes accidents just happen, but people don’t always understand. That’s what happened in our story today.

He staggered down the road, breathing in short gasps. The stabbing pain in his side made him stumble. He looked back over his shoulder in terror. There was no one behind him that he could see. But he knew someone would be coming.

He faced forward again and tried to run faster. It couldn’t be very far away now.

The city of Shechem. The city of refuge.

The road down which he ran was in good condition. And all the crossroads had signposts that marked

the way. “Refuge!” they read. “Refuge!” At least he wouldn’t get lost. The only question was, would he make it to the city in time?

He hadn’t meant to harm his neighbor. He hadn’t meant to hurt him. But his axe head had flown off and struck his neighbor’s face. It was true. He had accidentally killed a man.

Yes, he had done it. But it had been an accident. An unfortunate, unplanned accident. Even so, his neighbor’s family would come after him. A life for a life. That was the law. But if he could get to the city of refuge, he would be safe. He would explain it all to the elders, everything that had happened. And they would keep him safe until a trial could be held.

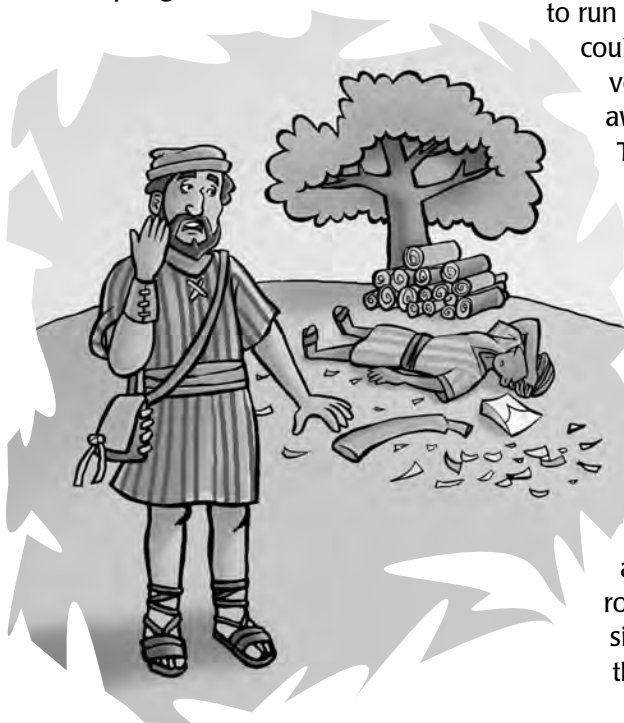
He looked back again. Someone was running along the road behind him—far back in the distance. He sobbed and turned and tried to run even faster. He had to make it to Shechem!

The city gates were just ahead. Elders were waiting there to see if he would be permitted in. He ran faster. He would make it! He *had* made it! God was good!

Having cities of refuge was God’s idea. He knew that sometimes people get accused of something they did not do. And sometimes bad things happen by accident. So God told Moses to set aside cities here and there throughout the nation of Israel. Cities where people could run for safety and be given a fair trial.

But the cities of refuge could only keep people safe if they stayed *inside* the city. If they went outside the city walls, they could be caught and hurt. Sometimes the people seeking safety had to live there the rest of their lives unless the high priest died. If that happened, all was forgiven and they could go free.

We need a place of refuge today too. And God has provided one for us. Church is a place of refuge where we worship together.



Daily Activities

Sabbath

- With your family, take a walk and look for places of refuge for God's creatures. For example, holes in tree trunks, ant hills, a turtle's own shell. Read your lesson story together. Now look up to the sky. Read John 14:2 to learn about God's great refuge in the sky. Imagine your "safe place" there.
- Sing "Anywhere With Jesus" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 45).

Sunday

- During family worship, read about the cities of refuge in Deuteronomy 4:41-43. Tell in your own words what "refuge" means.
- Make two simple tents—one of strong cardboard and the other of soft newspaper. Sit in each tent and tell your family which is stronger and safer as a refuge. Write about or draw examples of a refuge from Satan in your life (prayer, God, reading the Bible, going to church). Attach what you wrote or drew to the strong tent.
- Teach your memory verse to your family.

Monday

- During worship, read together Psalm 61:1-4. From where does God send help? See Psalm 20:1, 2. "Sanctuary" is another word for church. God invites you to meet Him there.
- Draw a picture of you and your family in your church.
- Sing a song about church—"What Joy It Is to Worship Here" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 142). Then thank God for your church.

Tuesday

- Together with your family, read Joshua 20:1-6.
- Choose somewhere nearby to be your refuge. Ask a family member to run to the refuge while

you chase them. Then have that person chase you. How does it feel to make it safely to the refuge? How is your church like a refuge? Tell three ways that you can help make it a safe place.

- Use sign language as you say your memory verse.

Wednesday

- During worship today, read Proverbs 18:10. What strong refuge is mentioned in this text? Who is the Refuge who saves us from sin? We worship Jesus at church to thank Him for rescuing us from Satan.
- Build a "city of refuge" with blocks, and have a toy "person" running toward it.
- Because of war, some people have to leave their homes. What are these people called? What does your country do to help them? What can your family do?
- Pray for people who worship in countries where they are persecuted.

Thursday

- With your family, read Joshua 20:6. When could the accused leave the city of refuge?
- Because of Jesus' death, we will go someday to the place He has prepared—the safest place of all. Tell Jesus how you feel about the refuge He offers.
- Use sign language as you say your memory verse from memory.

Friday

- During sunset worship tonight, tell your family about cities of refuge. Read Psalm 95:6 together.
- Make a picture of the heavenly city of refuge.
- Sing "I Was Glad" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 144).
- Recite John 14:1-3 to your family, then ask them to say it with you. Thank God for the Sabbath and the refuge it gives from everyday life.