

The Word

A vertical photograph of a night sky viewed through a narrow, rocky canyon. The sky is a deep, vibrant blue-green, densely populated with stars of various magnitudes. The canyon walls are rugged, reddish-brown rock formations that frame the sky on both sides. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the rock.

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A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE RESOURCES

In order to be relevant and accessible to all readers, we sometimes recommend resources from websites. We choose these resources carefully, but cannot check or endorse all the content of a website – particularly future content, which is impossible to predict. Always remember to check internet opinions against Bible principles, and talk to someone at your Sunday School or church about any concerns that arise.

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The Word, March 2025



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Designer: Julia Snobelen

The Word: Refuge

In the world today, we come across many people seeking refuge – a place of safety in a time of crisis. Whole communities can be uprooted by conflict, or by natural disasters such as fires and flooding. Sometimes, people need to be rescued from abusive homes, or unsafe neighbourhoods. All of us at some point will feel the need for refuge from the daily grind of life, or need support through times of illness, grief or pain. And we all need rescuing from ourselves – from the destructive results of our human nature.

Refuge can come in many forms – protection, safety, compassion, charity, warmth, healing, abundance and peace. In this issue, we'll look at how God provides all these things, and more, to those who trust in Him. We can look forward to a time of mercy and justice in the future, when everyone is valued and cared for, and no-one is left out in the cold.

Meanwhile, we're called to be places of refuge for anyone seeking it – to be welcoming to strangers, to love our enemies, and to identify with outcasts, rather than the powerful and proud. This is the viewpoint of the Bible, which tracks the stories of the underdogs, the fugitives and the refugees. God's message is that everyone matters, and He is waiting with open arms to welcome us all.

So let's pray that we can be a refuge for others, whilst also being humble enough to ask for help when we need it too.

Love, *Becky Lewis*

Remember!

Past issues of 'The Word' are available to download here:

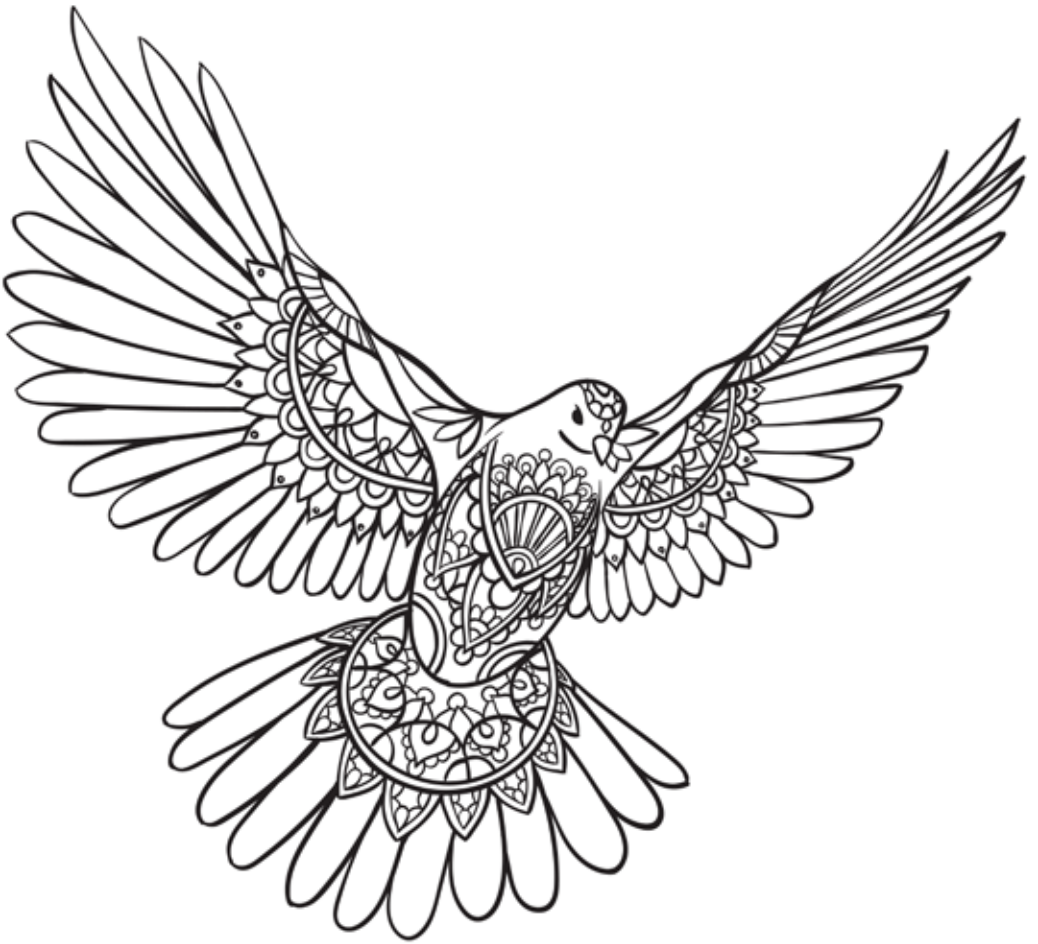
the-word.uk

Places of Refuge

God gives protection and shelter in the storms of life. Can you identify these Old Testament places of refuge, and who they were provided for? If you're stuck, look up the Bible references in the box below.



Genesis 2:8 Jonah 1:17 Genesis 7:1-16 Nehemiah 6:15-16 1 Samuel 22:1



**May you be richly rewarded
by the LORD, the God of Israel,
under whose wings
you have come to take
refuge.**

RUTH 2:12

Wilderness and exile

By Becky Lewis

The Bible spends a lot of time exploring how God offers refuge to outsiders, fugitives, exiles and underdogs. It is normal for believers to be outcasts – often in the wilderness, learning to rely on God’s support, and trust in His protection.

When the children of Israel were rescued from Egypt, they were commanded to remember where they had come from. It was to be a crucial part of their identity, that they had suffered as immigrant slaves. That collective memory was meant to ensure that they treated everyone as they would wish to be treated – neighbour and foreigner:

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 19:33-34

Sadly, this was soon forgotten. Prophets were sent by God to remind them, they experienced

exile and captivity, followed by a return to their land – but still they weren’t getting it right.

Finally, God sent His Son to show them. Jesus himself experienced being an outsider. He knows what it feels like to not belong, to flee for your life, to be a foreigner, and to be rejected by others:

- his cot was an animal trough;
- his family had to flee to Egypt to escape Herod;
- he spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness;
- he travelled around preaching, with no fixed abode;
- he was rejected by his own people;
- he endured the death of a shamed criminal.

So, no matter how much of an outsider we feel we are, Jesus is able to understand.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus turned people’s prejudices upside-down. Not only should they have been prepared to

love their enemy, but this enemy had the potential to be praised for loving them!

Like the children of Israel were meant to do, we should remember that everyone has value, and that we all need rescuing from sin. No one is any better than anyone else – we are all equal in God’s eyes.

Like Jesus, we need to value citizenship of God’s kingdom above being comfortable in this life, rejecting worldly systems that have been built upon fear, exploitation and greed. We also need to watch out for dividing

people into ‘us and them’ – we should love everyone, and trust in God’s mercy and justice.

Hebrews 11 lists a great cloud of faithful people, who rejected the status quo, trusting that God would give them refuge in the end. The

Like Jesus, we need to value citizenship of God’s kingdom above being comfortable in this life...

writer says that “the world was not worthy of them” (v38), and yet their acts of faith are listed

to inspire us! – “since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (v40).



‘Angels unawares’ is a statue representing many refugee stories from past and present. It was sculpted by Timothy Schmalz, inspired by Hebrews 13:2.

Hebrews 11: refugees, outcasts, exiles, rebels

Find these 7 Old Testament people of faith, mentioned in Hebrews 11,
to complete the wordsearch.

Refused to be a prince of Egypt (v24) _____

Lived in tents (v9) _____

Hid enemy spies (v31) _____

Built a boat (v7) _____

Requested a burial in the Promised Land (v22) _____

G	N	I	S	A	J	A	C	O	B
R	A	O	K	V	F	I	C	B	O
K	H	E	M	W	O	U	G	J	I
I	H	A	J	O	S	E	P	H	E
O	A	P	C	A	S	O	R	E	C
M	T	H	A	O	N	E	T	B	A
F	A	Q	T	L	B	S	S	R	A
E	R	H	E	A	H	X	Y	I	S
S	H	B	A	H	A	R	K	T	I
D	I	D	S	R	I	K	R	M	L
A	J	R	N	U	B	U	I	B	Y
B	S	H	L	I	O	A	P	H	A

Refugees

By Brian Bilston



They have no need of our help
So do not tell me
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are
Chancers and scroungers
Layabouts and loungers
With bombs up their sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves
They are not
Welcome here
We should make them
Go back to where they came from
They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries
Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not okay to say
These are people just like us
A place should only belong to those who are born there
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way

(now read from bottom to top)



Digging deeper

Cities of refuge

As part of the Law of Moses, God commanded that some Levite (priestly) cities should be set up as special places for people to flee to, if they were suspected of murder.

In the cultures of the time, it was expected that a relative of a victim would pursue the killer for vengeance. There was no police force to carry out an investigation or chase down a suspect.

Read or listen to Deuteronomy 19:1-13, then consider these questions:

- 1) Why do you think the cities of refuge were important? What could have happened if these cities did not exist?
- 2) Why did the Israelites need to make sure that the cities were evenly spaced out?
- 3) What do you think the cities show us about the way God views our mistakes?

4) Do you think that every suspect should have been allowed to stay safe in the city? If not, why not?

Joshua 20 and Numbers 35 provide more detail, adding that the suspect would need to stand trial in the city of refuge. This was to make sure that murderers did not escape justice. The priority was always to protect life and keep society safe.

5) If a murderer was sentenced to death, does that mean they could not be forgiven by God if they repented?

According to legal historians like Raymond Westbrook and Pamela Barmash, the Israelite cities of refuge were an important step forward. Other cultures (such as Mesopotamia or Greece) offered places of sanctuary - often holy places such as temples. But anyone could remain safe there, even if they had killed on purpose. To have structure in place for a public, fair trial seems to have been unique to the Law of Moses.

Refuge in David's Psalms

There were many times when David was in real danger, fleeing for his life, as well as times when he himself was guilty and in need of forgiveness. Many of his psalms reflect David's need for refuge and God as his safe haven.



Read or listen to these Psalms. What type of refuge is David mainly thinking about in each Psalm? One is done for you.

Psalm 32

Deliverance from guilt

Psalm 110

Psalm 57

A future Messiah

Psalm 18

Psalm 51

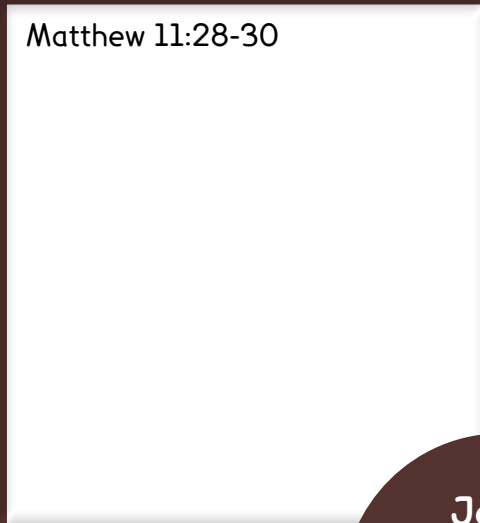
Psalm 142

Safety from enemies

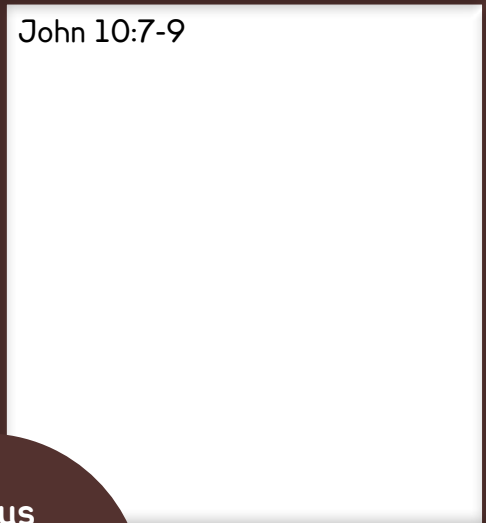
Refuge in the New Testament

Describe or draw the key images in these New Testament verses. This will build a picture of how we can have refuge now and in the future, and how we can provide refuge to others.

Matthew 11:28-30

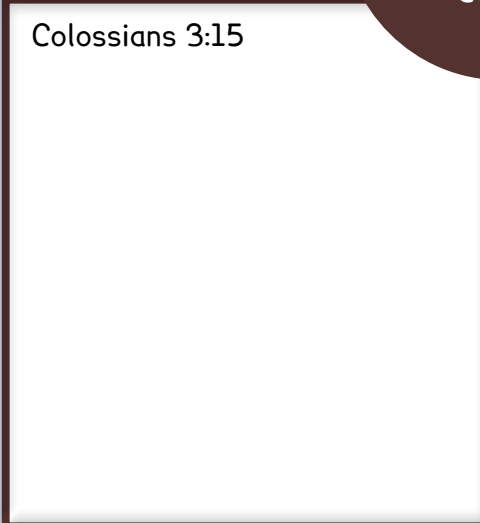


John 10:7-9

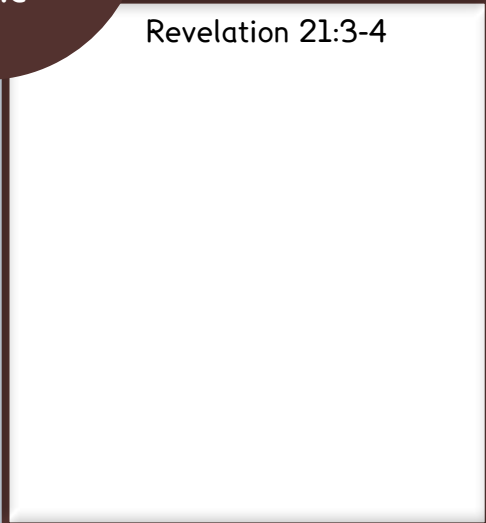


Jesus
provides
refuge now
& refuge to
come

Colossians 3:15



Revelation 21:3-4



Matthew 5:14-16

Matthew 7:24-25

Matthew 25:34-40

Followers
of Jesus
give refuge
to others

Acts 2:41-47

Galatians 6:2

Hebrews 13:2

Book Reviews

Discover two brand new books that contain themes of refuge, set 2000 years apart!

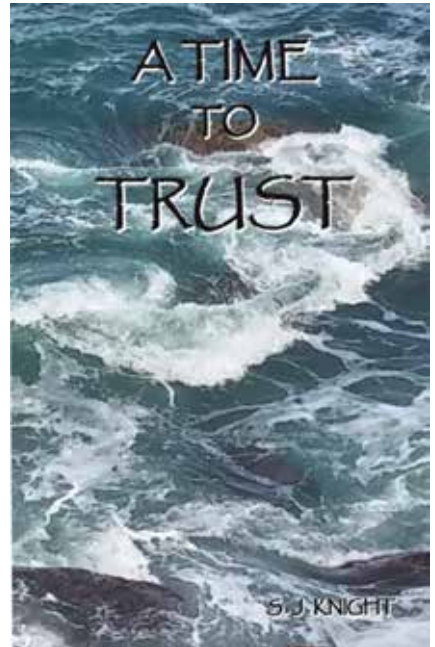
A Time to Trust written by S.J. Knight

Available for £17 from thechristadelphian.com

(Earlier books in the series cost less.)

During difficult times, the Apostle Paul relied upon the comfort of having Jesus as his refuge and strength, and looked forward to the ultimate refuge of the future kingdom.

'A Time to Trust' is set during the last recorded journey of Paul. It is the newest book in the 'Time to...' series imagining extra details and characters around New Testament events. (We reviewed the first book of the series in our July 2022 issue.) This is an extract from a longer review by Deborah Pidgeon, posted on the Facebook page of Christadelphian Books & Literature Agents.



'A Time to Trust' is a truly exciting account of the last recorded journey of the Apostle Paul, who after 2 years of imprisonment in Caesarea is being sent to Rome to appeal to Caesar against his alleged crimes. Travelling with him is faithful physician Loukanos [Luke] and his beloved horse Hippocrates. Also aboard the massive Alexandrian grain ship are the crew, passengers, soldiers, and an assortment of prisoners in the charge of Centurion Julius.

The story starts with a bang and keeps us on tenterhooks as we are taken on a rollercoaster journey of danger, terror, mutiny, shipwreck, hope, salvation, joy, sadness, uncertainty, humour, and humanity at its worst and also at its best. So many emotions are experienced throughout this book, and at the heart of it all, the unwavering faith of the main protagonists Paul and Loukanos who, despite seemingly impossible odds, remain steadfast in their belief and trust that Paul will reach Rome, as Jesus had promised him more than two years before...

The author has not only remained true to the facts and timeline of events, and the integrity and core values of the people recorded in the New Testament, but has brought them respectfully and vividly to three-dimensional life, warts and all, which makes them very relatable to the reader. These are real flesh-and-blood people who, though from another era, are very much like ourselves, experiencing all the highs and lows of life, including severe trials and sorrow, love and laughter, friendship, and complicated family relationships.

It is obvious that a great deal of meticulous research has been undertaken by the author in determining many ancient trading-ship and sailing details, as well as to give us a rich and authentic picture of the lifestyles, food, and customs of First Century people and places... The author's talent for recreating time, place, and historical detail, places the reader firmly on the ship with all on board in the midst of the storm, sharing the emotions, the drama and the tension.

I can highly recommend this book (and all six previous books in the series) which has something for everyone, whatever their age, gender, or beliefs. I am sure that nobody who reads 'A Time To Trust', will ever read the final chapters of Acts in quite the same way again.

A Place to Go written by Christine Walker

Available for £6 from cssu.org.uk

This book is set in the present day. It is about a group of friends who find a place to meet together. This review is by Ezra Davies, age 14.



'A Place to Go' is a new addition to the growing collection of scripture-based fictional books. It is mainly written for young people, to show that it is difficult in the struggling world that we live in, and that anybody can come to learn the Bible. There are some other examples of this such as 'Vaughan's Vision' by Heather Bourke and 'Eleven Weeks' by Anna Tikvah. It is quite a quick read that makes you think deeply about why the kingdom of God is so important and how we need it so much.

Published and set in the UK, 'A Place to Go' shows a little group of young people, some of whom attend the meeting, some who don't, and one or two who come occasionally. These youths find that trying to obey God is challenging, and that you can easily be enticed and dragged into the lures of the world ("And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2 KJV)). The children also realise that there are some people in the world who aren't at all interested in God's word, and that they must go against them to do what pleases God. Of course, though, there is always the option of the straight and narrow path to God's kingdom for anyone who will accept it.

For me, the true hero of the book is Izzy Stanton, one of the main characters, who finds herself getting caught up in the wickedness of the world. At that point, I wondered what would happen further on in the book. It was very intriguing and made me want to carry on reading.

When bad things happen to them, the teenagers start to realise that the place they go is far less important than the friendships they have and the support they provide for one another.

Charity spotlight: **CARA**

'CARA' stands for Christadelphian Aid for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. It was set up to help ecclesias support refugees, asylum seekers, and those granted leave to remain in the UK. Many of these visitors to our churches can need help with food, clothing, shelter and mental health. They might also need support with learning English, job hunting and transportation to our activities.

Many ecclesias are keen to provide support, but can be limited in resources and struggle to cater for everyone. CARA offers grants to cover costs, and advice and guidance on the best ways to help.

CARA has recently supported:

Help with travel expenses, enabling access to education and employment in Manchester, Leeds, Plymouth and London.

Support for getting accommodation, furniture and household goods once leave to remain was granted.



A crafting event with Kings Heath Christadelphians, for female refugee members and friends. The aim was to enable the women to form connections so they feel more comfortable and involved in church life.

You can read and hear the personal stories of some Iranian Christadelphian refugees here:


tidings.org/articles/personal-testimonies-of-christadelphian-iranian-refugees

Self-reflection: Are you a safe space?

Creating a safe space means being someone that your friends can trust and feel comfortable around. This quiz will help you reflect on your habits and how they might affect those around you. Choose the answer that best describes how you would typically respond in these situations.

- 1. A friend tells you something personal and asks you not to share it.**
 - a. I keep it to myself, unless they are in danger.
 - b. I might tell one or two people if I know they won't spread it.
 - c. I tell others, especially if I think it's not a big deal.
- 2. A new classmate is sitting alone at lunch. What do you do?**
 - a. I invite them to sit with me or my group.
 - b. I smile at them, but I stay with my usual friends.
 - c. I ignore them – they'll figure it out eventually.
- 3. Your friend shares that they're struggling with something emotionally.**
 - a. I listen carefully, offer support, and ask how I can help.
 - b. I listen, but change the topic if it gets too serious.
 - c. I downplay it or make a joke to lighten the mood.
- 4. Someone in your group starts gossiping about another friend.**
 - a. I say something to stop it, or I change the subject.
 - b. I listen but don't add anything.
 - c. I join in – everyone talks about each other sometimes.
- 5. A friend confides something shocking that you weren't expecting.**
 - a. I stay calm, listen, and let them know I'm there for them.
 - b. I try not to react much, but don't know what to say.
 - c. I react immediately, questioning or criticizing their choices.
- 6. Your friend tells you about a mistake they made.**
 - a. I remind them that everyone makes mistakes and offer support.
 - b. I give them advice, but tell them they should've known better.
 - c. I tell them it's their fault and they need to fix it alone.

Award yourself these points for each answer:
a = 3 points b = 2 points c = 1 point

A young man and woman are sitting on a wooden deck outdoors. The man is on the right, wearing a white t-shirt and light blue shorts, looking towards the woman. The woman is on the left, wearing a light blue shirt, looking back at the man. They appear to be in a conversation. The background shows green foliage and a gravel path.

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

James 1:19

Results:

15-18 points - Trusted safe space:

Your friends likely see you as someone they can confide in without fear of judgment or betrayal. You actively work to make others feel safe and accepted. Keep it up!

10-14 points - Good friend, but room to grow:

You're a supportive friend, but sometimes your actions might unintentionally make others hesitant to open up. Reflect on where you can be more mindful and compassionate.

6-9 points - Needing improvement:

You may not realize it, but some of your actions might create discomfort or distrust. Consider how gossiping, joking, or avoiding serious conversations might affect your relationships. Making small changes can help you become a more reliable and trusted friend.

Christadelphian music with themes of refuge

Refuge is a large theme in the Psalms, so it's not surprising that the idea of refuge frequently appears in our modern worship songs. Here are just a few samples for you to try...

"In the Storm" is an album by Jehoshaphat Music, available for free on the Christadelphian 'Renew' app.



"Come into the ark" is track 9 on the popular "Choose Your Eternity" album. The song is also published in the Purple Worship book. The whole album is available on bandcamp:

stephtappouras.bandcamp.com/album/choose-your-eternity

"Stronghold" is a new album by Damascus road, also available on bandcamp. Many of the songs are from the new Blue Worship book.



damascusroad.bandcamp.com/album/stronghold