



HOME GROUP GUIDE

October 27, 2019

Cities of Light — Joshua 20–21

About this guide: This guide is provided to assist your Home Group in discussion and application of the most recent sermon. This guide provides direction for application-based discussion within a small group as well as discussion material. **Please know that the guide is not designed with the intent that every question be answered systematically.** Feel free to pick and choose the questions that fit your group and structure your time together using the guide to maximize your group's benefit.

Notice organization of the guide: Looking Back, Looking Up and Looking Forward. “Looking Back” is the time for the group to consider how the last week or two has gone, to share about struggles and victories. Consider choosing one or two items from this section to answer.

“Looking Up and Looking Forward” is a time to discuss the sermon and how the group might further apply the truth of God's Word, making specific plans individually and as a group to walk by faith in the week to come. This is also a time to encourage each other, minister to each other and pray for each other. Try to choose a couple elements from this section.

The guide also contains a family discipleship section with a few ideas on how to intentionally engage in following the Lord as a family.

Looking Back:

- Share how you have been doing since you last met:
 - What biblical truths have been shaping your life and heart over the last week or so?
 - What has dominated your prayer life this week?
 - What was a “win” in your life this last week (something that happened that resulted in thankfulness, a moment of spiritual growth or victory, an answered prayer, etc.)?
 - What was the biggest challenge in your life this last week? Is there anything that you need to share with your Home Group in the form of confession?
- With whom were you able to begin to build a gospel bridge of conversation since the last time we met?
With whom were you able to share the gospel message?
- How can the group help you this next week?

Looking Up and Looking Forward (specific, realistic, measurable, personal): Read Joshua 20–21.

Recap: In the final division of land among the tribes of Israel, the Lord makes provision for six cities of refuge along with 48 cities of the Levites spread throughout the Promised Land. These cities represent the fulfillment of a prophecy made many years before the conquest of Canaan, and reveal an important message about the nature of God.

1. The cities of refuge were specific places that people who had unintentionally killed another person could flee from retaliation by the “avenger of blood.” The rules regarding these cities are mentioned here in Joshua, as well as prophetically in Deuteronomy 4:41, Deuteronomy 19:1–13 and Numbers 35:6.

- What does the establishment of cities of refuge teach us about the nature of God? Specifically, what do we notice about God's sense of judgment and mercy? How does this shape our views on the sanctity of life and the importance of protecting people from unfair punishment in the event of an accident?
 - Many of these rules and definitions of manslaughter are mirrored in our legal system to this day. How does this affect our understanding of the importance or impact of God's Word on our society today? How can we use this example of modern-day laws based on biblical truths to defend our faith against those who claim that the Bible is an old book that is outdated or irrelevant?
 - Read Proverbs 18:10. How is God Himself like a city of refuge? How did He provide salvation for our sins, both intentional and unintentional? How can we encourage others to find refuge from their sins?
2. The Levitical cities were divided among the tribe of Levi, not as land that they owned, but as land they could use to provide for their physical needs. The Levites were required to go and perform their priestly duties at the tabernacle and then return to their homes scattered among the tribes of Israel.
 - How do our own routines as Christians mirror the experience of a Levitical priest? In what ways do we help lead in worship at church, and then scatter into our community to take the message of God's love to those around us?
 - Think back to our Next Steps Challenge. If we fail to take our next steps in following the Lord's leadership, how does it affect the people around us? What would happen to a community of Israelites living around a Levitical priest who was unwilling to fulfill his priestly role of communicating God's laws and God's love? On the other hand, how valuable would a committed Levitical priest be to the community who understood the laws of God and how much God loved them? How does this shape our perspective on how valuable we are to those who have never heard about the love of God through Jesus Christ?
 3. Taken together, both the cities of refuge and Levitical cities form an image of the future church. Read Matthew 5:14–16.
 - What does it mean that our church is to be a refuge for sinners? How are we succeeding at providing a safe place for sinful people to find rescue from sin through Jesus Christ? In what ways could we improve?
 - Imagine that you are the only light of the gospel that someone else will ever see. How likely would your neighbors/co-workers/non-Christian friends be to find the true Light of the World, Jesus Christ based on your example alone? How can your Home Group pray for each other that our lights would shine bright into a world of darkness?

Don't forget:

1. Pray for one another. Share one specific prayer request you need your group to pray each day until you meet again.
2. Pray for each of our campuses: the Georgetown Campus — Sundays at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. and the Liberty Hill Campus at 11:00 a.m.
3. Pray for those in the community who attended Fall Fest or Great Pumpkin Hunt this past week.

Family Discipleship Ideas (Deuteronomy 6:5–7):

When you wake: Each morning, read one of the verses below and reflect on the question. How does each verse speak about stepping forward in action and faith?

- Read Joshua 20:9 — For whom did God create the refuge cities? Why would God create a safe place for “aliens and foreigners”?
- Read Joshua 1:1–5 — What did God promise Joshua and the Israelites? Now, read Joshua 21:43–45. Which promises did God keep?
- Read Joshua 21:44 — What is rest? How do you think our definition of rest is different than God’s rest?
- Read Matthew 11:28–30 — Who is speaking here? According to this, where does rest come from?
- Read Psalm 34:22 — How can we take refuge today? How can we offer refuge to others?

Before you sleep: As you tuck your children into bed at night (whether age 2 or 22), remind them of these simple truths:

- God loves mercy. Today He has given me an unmeasurable amount of mercy. Can you think of any way He’s been merciful to you today?
- God keeps all His promises. Every. Single. One.
- God promises He will go before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. We can trust that He’ll keep the promise to always be with you.

When you sit down: Grab a Bible and discuss Joshua 20–21 with your family. Here’s a synopsis of the passage.

“The Cities of Refuge were six cities allocated to the Levite tribe [the priests] in the Old Testament that provided asylum for perpetrators of unintentional manslaughter. Divinely appointed and subject to Mosaic Law, the cities offered offenders refuge and protection from retribution of the avenging family until their case went to trial.”¹

Basically, if you accidentally murdered someone, you could high-tail it to one of these cities so the family wouldn’t immediately kill you in retribution.

“The cities were strategically placed, in order that they could be easily reached within one day of travel or less (Joshua 20:9). The Cities of Refuge also offered asylum to foreigners. The roads leading to the six cities were well maintained in order to ensure a smooth passage for fugitives. Additionally, clearly marked signposts were found at crossroads which read *Miklat* meaning “Refuge.”¹

Discuss:

- What was the purpose of the cities of refuge?
 - Answer: To protect those who accidentally murdered someone from avenging family members until they could receive a trial; and to offer asylum to foreigners and aliens.
- How are cities of refuge like our churches today?
- In what condition were the roads kept?
- As Christ-followers, how can we ensure the “roads” to our churches are kept “wide and clear” for those seeking refuge in Christ?
- What characteristics of God do you see displayed in this passage?

Along the way: As you drive to and from drop-offs and pick-ups, here are some conversation starters to engage your kids in.

- What is a refuge? Are there some places you consider a refuge today?

- If God set up cities for foreigners and people who accidentally murdered, what does that tell you about what God cares about?
- Is our church a “refuge city”? What can you do to make the church even more of a refuge to more people?

¹Twooney, Madeline. “What Were the Cities of Refuge in the Bible?” *Christianity.com*. Salem Web Network, June 14, 2019. <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-were-the-cities-of-refuge-in-the-bible.html>.