



## A Safe Place.

A “safe place” has been defined as “a place that provides a physically and emotionally safe environment for a person or group of people, especially a place where people can freely express themselves without fear of prejudice, negative judgment, etc.”. The communities we all live in have been challenged to meet the demands of strong cultural influences that in themselves have created the need for more diverse safe spaces.

As I read through scripture, I am reminded in various ways that “safe places” are not a new thing, especially if you read through the book of Psalms. Often described as a place of refuge or hiding place, the writers describe more than just a physical space, they were pointing to their relationship with God as their place of refuge.

Psalms 46:1-3 says that “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.” Psalm 91:2 describes God as “My refuge and strength” while Psalm 46:1 echoes these words. Psalm 32:7 says, “You are my hiding place”.

Scripture also draws for us some thought-provoking word pictures that describe God as a place of refuge. He is called a “Fortress” (Ps 46:7); A rock, a fortress, and a deliverer. (2 Sa 22:2-3); A shelter or shade (Ps 91:1); Sheltering wings (Ps 57:1); A shield (Ge 15:1), and a tower (Pr. 18:10). All these word pictures share in the meaning of how God is our place of refuge, a safe place to abide in.

As a follower of Christ, where is your place of refuge? What do you do or where do you go to feel safe? Where can you go to freely express yourself as a child of God?

I have had the privilege of being raised in the church since the day I was born. Over the many years of life that I have lived the church has been a safe place for me. Within the “four walls” of the church is a place where I can freely express myself without fear of prejudice and negative judgement.

In addition to the definition already given here, a place of refuge can also be described as a “stronghold from which to launch a counterattack”. While this may sound a little extreme, I do believe that this is true. A church committed to extending the mission of Christ becomes the training grounds or center for equipping people to live out their faith in a world resistant to knowing and accepting the good news of the gospel.

Christ is the head of the church. Colossians chapter 1:15-18 states *“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”*

Knowing that Christ is the head of the church, we can take refuge in him. He becomes the rock our salvation is built on, he is the shelter, the shade where we can find rest, he becomes our shield of defense, a fortress where we can find safety and peace from the trials and temptations of the world constantly places in front of us.

This has been my experience with the church, I know that this is not everyone’s experience. There are those who have been hurt by others in the church, it is my hope and prayer that these hurts/hearts can be healed, and the church can be the safe place it was designed to be.