

# Sermon Study

Kingdom Under Construction - People-Refuge  
Joshua 20

July 22, 2018

## vision

Eastview  
Christian  
Church is a  
fearless church  
of Christ  
followers whose  
ridiculous love  
and dangerous  
witness are  
irresistible.



### **AUTHOR'S NOTE** (summary of key points for this study)

*In this study, we'll look at the Cities of Refuge and discover that parallels to Jesus are everywhere. There are few clearer examples of God's grace and justice than what we see in the Cities of Refuge. As you read Joshua 20, be thinking in terms of God's love for you, His provision for you, and His proactive plan to save you from the Avenger of Blood through Jesus Christ.*

### **Gather** (your group getting to know each other)

Share a time when you made a serious mistake or hurt someone or damaged something completely by accident.

**Go**  
(your group on mission)

Out in the world, the role of the Avenger of Blood seems common. It's normal to want 'revenge' on someone who has wronged us, even if they wronged us accidentally. But consider how choosing the route of forgiveness might be a more powerful witness to your unbelieving friends. This week, whether in ways large or small, if you have the opportunity to choose between vengeance and forgiveness, keep Joshua 20 at the top of your mind.

**Grow** (your group growing as Christ-followers)

### Key Scripture

"They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood."  
(Joshua 20:3, ESV)

### Discussion

1. Have someone begin the discussion time by leading the group in prayer, then read all of Joshua 20 aloud.

2. Verses 3-5 summarize it pretty well, so in your own words, spend a quick minute making sure everyone generally understands what a "City of Refuge" is.

3. The first thing to notice is that God initiates this...again. God first introduced the concept of Cities of Refuge to Moses back in Numbers 35 (and again in Deuteronomy 19), commanding the Israelites to set them up once they took possession of the Promised Land, and now God brings it up again. John Calvin writes that setting up these cities apparently "did not occur to their own minds until they were again reminded of it. Here we perceive how tardy men are, not only to perform their duty, but to provide for their own safety, unless the Lord frequently urge them, and prick them forward by the stimulus of exhortation." What does it say about God that these Cities of Refuge were a high priority for Him?

4. What does it say about God that He kept reminding them?

5. What does it say about the Israelites that these cities were apparently not a high priority for them?

6. How do you react to those who make mistakes or accidents that directly impact you?

7. God will not be duped. Verses 4 and 6 indicate that the manslayer can't intentionally murder someone and then just "pretend" that it was an accident. To ensure that these Cities of Refuge aren't easily abused and manipulated, he has to both "explain himself to the elders" and then "stand before the congregation for judgment." What might we learn from this about God's commitment to Justice?

8. Well, Jesus is all over this passage. These cities paint a picture of the salvation that is found only in Him. Read Romans 5:18-21. How are we like the "manslayer" mentioned in Joshua 20, and how is salvation in Christ like the City of Refuge?

9. Notice that as long as the person stayed within the city, he was safe. What parallels are here for us in wandering away from Jesus?

10. We are all being pursued by an Avenger of Blood. Read Romans 6:23. How does our City of Refuge protect us from the Avenger of Blood?

11. Lastly, notice there were 6 Cities of Refuge, and if we broke out the map, we'd see that they were placed so that there was no tribe that was ever too far from one (v.7-8). What does the positioning of these cities tell us about God? And how does this also parallel to Jesus?

**Give**  
(your group serving each other)

What would it look like for your house to be a 'House of Refuge,' where your group members could feel comfortable talking about their accidents and unintentional mistakes? If the opportunity presents itself, serve your group this week by reinforcing that no one is perfect, and they're free to flee into your company where they're sure to be safe and receive a fair hearing rather than being immediately judged and exiled.