

Sanctuary By Shari Miller

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages Available Online

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

Church buildings and their chancel areas are often referred to as sanctuaries. The Oxford Online Dictionary (www.oxforddictionaries.com), defines the word "sanctuary" as "a place of refuge or safety."

Many traditional churches have stained glass windows. How could stained glass windows help the church building become even more of a sanctuary from the distractions of the outside world?

Stained glass does not allow the distractions of the world and full sunlight to enter the church, as non-stained glass windows would. Stained glass windows often depict the biblical accounts in Scripture and remind worshippers of all that God has done for them. That is what they see, rather than moving traffic and the like.

What other characteristics of traditional church buildings remind us of sanctuary or refuge? See **Genesis 7:7** for one example. **The worship area of traditional church buildings is often in the shape of an overturned ark. The nave reminds us of how Noah was saved by God from the ravages of the flood.**

Many are also a part of the shape of a cross. Genesis 7:7: And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.

Faith Talk: Identify with a partner or in your small group your sanctuaries, your personal spaces where you feel protected and safe, where you can relax, be comfortable, and secure. (Perhaps these sanctuaries may not be bound by physical space.) **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group throughout the study. It might take some time to think through this. Perhaps the leader might want to give an example of her own. Some examples might include: a garden, a park, a room in your home, your car, your family, your marriage, your friends, relationships, or your history.**

During this Bible study, we will look at broken and restored sanctuary. We will see why our personal sanctuaries are broken and that only our Savior Jesus, true God and true man, can restore our brokenness. He is our Refuge and Peace!

Opening Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, We thank and praise You for Your gift of life! We confess the many times that we have sinned and have built a wall of sin between us and You. Thank You for sending Your Son to live a perfect life, suffer, and die on the cross to break down that wall of sin. We confidently look to our Savior, Who has become our Refuge and given us the peace that passes all understanding and the hope of eternal life. Thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us in the one true faith. Bless our study of Your Word. Sanctify us in the truth, Lord, for Your Word is truth (John 17:17). In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

How is sanctuary defined in the following Bible verses? **Exodus 25:8; 13:21–22, Psalm 96:6, Jeremiah 17:12, and Revelation 15:5–8**

Sanctuary is where God dwells. He guides and protects. His sanctuary radiates strength and beauty. His sanctuary is from the beginning; everlasting and awe-inspiring in heaven.

Exodus 25:8: And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

Exodus 13:21-22: ²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

Psalm 96:6: ⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Jeremiah 17:12: ¹² A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

Revelation 15:5-8: ⁵ After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was

opened, ⁶ and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

What picture of sanctuary does God give us in **Genesis 1:31a; 2:8–14, 25; and Genesis 3:8a?**

Perfection – good; lush and beautiful; man and woman did not know evil; God walks in the garden!

Genesis 1:31a: ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. **Genesis 2:8-14; 25:** ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. **Genesis 3:8a:** ⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,

What happens in the sanctuary of the worship service that shows our respect and awe of our Lord? Be specific. **We confess our sins, receive His absolution, hear His Word, speak to Him in prayer, praise Him in song, listen to Him in the Word and through the sermon, tell His story in the creeds, return His bounty to us in our offerings, and are recipients of His grace in the Sacraments.**

What model does **Acts 2:42–47** describe? **Early Christian church.**

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their

possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

If time permits: Why do we stand and sit within our worship service? **We stand out of respect as we receive the absolution, hear the Gospel, and talk to God. We sit to learn from His Word.**

Broken Sanctuary

How was the sanctuary of the Garden of Eden broken? **Sin – disobedience – wanting to be like God. Verse 7 – the eyes of both were opened and they knew they were naked.** Read **Genesis 3:1–13**. As a result of this broken sanctuary, what happened to all mankind's sanctuaries in **Romans 5:12? They, too, become broken and sin-filled.**

Genesis 3:1-13: ¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the

woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Romans 5:12: ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

How do our actions and words sometimes fail to show our respect and honor to our God within the walls of our churches? **By sinning – gossiping, dissension, idolatry, lying, hateful thoughts and words.**

Faith Talk: How does sin specifically shatter and break our personal sanctuaries? Discuss these three:

- The sanctuary of marriage
- The sanctuary of the home and family
- The sanctuary of your relationship with God

Answers may vary, but could include the following:

The sanctuary of marriage – no longer any solace, hope or security; competition between husband and wife; loneliness, apathy; divorce; death.

The sanctuary of the home – reduced to a war zone with a continual battle of wills, a continual struggle against Satan's temptations, a parent's indifference, a child's will at odds with the parent's, or mutual contempt and disrespect.

The sanctuary of your relationship with God – our sins; specifically, our sins of pride, idolatry, self-righteousness, apathy, and the like.

Restored Sanctuary

God's plan to restore our broken sanctuaries is outlined in **Ephesians 1:7–10** and **Colossians 1:11–13**. In your own words, how would you tell others about this Good News? Write it down! Share your witness with your group.

Answers will vary. Encourage everyone present to write down their witness and to share.

Ephesians 1:7-10: ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Colossians 1:11-13: ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,

¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Our High Priest Jesus has become our Refuge and we are now privileged by faith to once again enter into God's sanctuary – the gift from God Himself of a loving relationship with Him! Read and discuss **Hebrews 6:17–20**. Encourage sharing within the group. Discussion could include the phrase "heirs of the promise"; our unchangeable God; we flee to our God for refuge and encouragement to hold fast to our hope – the hope of eternal life; our hope is an "anchor of the soul"; Jesus our High Priest has gone before us into the sanctuary of heaven and our hope is sure that we will go to heaven, too.

Hebrews 6:17-20: ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

If time permits: What gifts from God in the following Psalms characterize this restored sanctuary that we have with our God in Christ Jesus? **Psalm 18:30; 25:20; 29:11; 31:1–2; 34:8; and 36:7.** Perhaps the leader could assign one Psalm per person in the group. Answers are evident in the passages below.

Psalm 18:30: This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Psalm 25:20: Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

Psalm 29:11: May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

Psalm 31:1-2: ¹ In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! ² Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!

Psalm 34:8: Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Psalm 36:7: How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

What does God promise all believers in **John 14:25–27**; **Acts 1:8**; and **1 Peter 5:10–11**?

The Holy Spirit; God's peace.

John 14:25-27: ²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

The Holy Spirit enables His people to be bold witnesses to the Good News of salvation in Jesus.

Acts 1:8: ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Eternal life in Christ!

1 Peter 5:10-11: ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

What do we, as God's restored people, strive to do as a result of all that our Savior has done for us? See **Ephesians 4:25–32** and **Colossians 3:16**.

Speak the truth; give no opportunity to the devil; do honest work; share with anyone in need; no corrupting talk, but build up one another; don't grieve the Holy Spirit; put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice; be kind to one another; tenderhearted, and forgiving.

Ephesians 4:25-32: ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness

and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Let the Word dwell in you; teach and admonish one another; sing psalms, hymns, spiritual songs; and be thankful.

Colossians 3:16: ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

According to **Revelation 21:1–5a**, how does God describe the restored sanctuary in heaven?

Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.

Revelation 21:1-5a: ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or in the small group how the Holy Spirit has restored your previously identified personal sanctuaries where sin has broken them. Be specific. **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

Faith Walk:

1. Thank and praise God for His daily blessings in your life.
2. Rejoice that you are God's own child because of the saving work of your Savior Jesus!
3. By the power of the Spirit, seek the refuge of our Lord and dwell in the shadow of His wings.
4. Share the love of Jesus and the Good News of salvation with the women in your life.
5. Become part of a structured daily Bible reading plan.

Closing: Share together the blessing of **1 Thessalonians 5:23** and **Philippians 4:7**:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Closing Prayer (sing or speak together): “Children of the Heavenly Father” (*Lutheran Service Book* #725): [See note below.]

Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish,
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy. Amen.

Alternate hymn selection: “All Depends on Our Possessing” (*LSB* #732; *LW* #415; *TLH* #425)