

THE GARDEN

Salt of the Earth: Palestinian Christians in the Northern West Bank: A Study Guide (leader version)

<http://www.saltfilms.net>



Summary: This session examines refuge. We'll talk about what we try to escape from and how we can seek refuge in the Lord. We'll meet a school secretary named Sawsan and her family who face fearful and uncertain times.

Supplies: Everyone should have a Bible. Bring copies of this session's student guide. You should have a chalkboard or flipchart. If you have a wall map of the region, find and mark Zababdeh and Jenin on it. You might also want to download a West Bank closure map from the UN. Color printing is best, but not essential. (http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/maps/Closure/mar/WB3_closure_0304_600.pdf)

3 **Prayer and introduction**

min Greet everyone and invite people to share any reflections they may have from the previous week's Daily Walk. Hand out the student guides and introduce today's study: *What do we want to escape and how do we seek refuge? We'll meet Sawsan (SOW-san), a secretary at the Catholic school in Zababdeh (za-BAHB-deh) who lives in Jenin (je-NEEN).* If you have a map, point out the locations of these towns on it. Invite someone to open the session in prayer or use the sample prayer at right.

Sample Prayer

Loving God, let us hear your word in all we do. Open our minds and hearts to your work in the world. Teach us how not to be afraid. Let us find our refuge in you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

3 **Scripture**

min Invite someone to read Psalm 46 aloud.
Invite someone else to read Mark 14:32-43 aloud.

10 **Questions**

min As a group, consider the following questions, and write responses on the board:
*In the scriptures, what do people want refuge from?
In our lives, what do we want refuge from?*

Leader Notes Psalm

The Psalm assures us that God is our very present help in trouble. It does not, however, assure us that there will not be trouble. In fact, it acknowledges the near certainty that there will be trouble: the mountains *will* shake; the mountains *will* tremble; the nations *will* rage and the kingdoms *will* totter. What do these images of fearful trouble translate to today, in our own lives?

Leader Notes Mark

Jesus frequently retreated to the garden of Gethsemane to rest, pray, and have fellowship with the disciples. In this passage, he seeks deliverance from God's will, and prayerfully submits. Do we seek deliverance or refuge from God's will? And do we submit? The disciples fall asleep in the garden; in spite of Jesus' warnings, they feel secure in their regular hang-out. Are we ever lulled into false senses of security when we are comfortable?

20
min

Film

Show “The Garden” segment of the film.

Leader Notes film

Sawsan is a secretary at the Latin Patriarchate School of Zababdeh. The school is preschool-12th grade. Nearly 800 Christian and Muslim boys and girls study there. The segment starts with Sawsan reading an article cut out from Al-Quds newspaper about the Jenin schoolbus being held at a checkpoint.

As a Christian school, they have Sunday off as well as Friday, the Muslim day of prayer; Saturday is a regular school day. School starts at 7:30 with assembly, which includes exercise, announcements, the Palestinian national anthem, readings from the Bible, and Christian prayer. On this day, the bus from Jenin arrives at school long after morning assembly. Sawsan and her family live in Jenin, and she takes the schoolbus with her two sons, Salim and Wissam. In the past there were three busses daily from the school to Jenin, but because of the situation, many families fear to send their children and many cannot afford the school fees, so now there is only one.

Religion is a regular school subject in Palestinian schools, and Islam is a required subject for upper level school certification. However, children who are not Muslim are not required to study Islam. Christian schools such as this one also offer Christian religion classes, as do public schools in areas with a significant Christian population. Jenin is not one of these areas, and consequently Sawsan is glad to send her sons to the Latin school, where they can study Christian religion. Later, Sawsan’s father-in-law reads to the boys from Proverbs (19:2 and 20:15) about knowledge.

School lets out every day at 1:35 in the afternoon, in time for students to go home for lunch, which is the main meal of the day in Palestinian culture. As the bus heads out, we hear Sawsan comment on the difficulties and unpredictability of travel. For the safety of the schoolchildren, a secret camera was used at the checkpoint. Cameras can aggravate the tense situation at military checkpoints. At the checkpoint there is a long line of vehicles waiting, including ambulances and a UN vehicle. The driver and the filmer approach the soldiers to ask about letting the bus pass, and are told to approach the tanks. Then they are told to wait. They are told to approach and then to return. They are at the checkpoint nearly three hours. When Sawsan and the boys get home, it is dusk and her husband Saleh is waiting for them. Over their meal, the family jokes about whether they are eating lunch, supper, or tomorrow’s breakfast.

On Sunday morning, Sawsan cleans the house and the boys do their homework. In Jenin, Sunday worship is in the evening in order to accommodate the fact that Sunday is a regular business day in this majority Muslim area. The boy’s grandfather tells how he and a nun from Jenin’s church went to the military office to ask for assurances that the schoolbus will be allowed to pass.

There are 45,000 people in Jenin, among them 35 Christian families. They all worship at the Roman Catholic services at the church in the center of town.

After worship, Sawsan and the family walk home together through empty streets, with the sound of tanks in the distance. The streets are especially empty because it is Ramadan, and most people are still breaking their daily fast. Back at home, Sawsan and Saleh sit in their garden, which they made to have a peaceful place to rest, away from the dangers of the current situation. Saleh points out where bullets went into their walls. Because they both have jobs and share the home compound with his parents and his brother’s family, Sawsan and Saleh have a good standard of living in the midst of a financially desperate time for many.

20 **Questions**

min As a group, talk about *what causes Sawsan’s family to seek refuge*. Write these on the board.

In groups of 2-4, discuss:

We try to escape from many things. Does taking refuge in the Lord protect us from them? How? In light of the scripture, the film, and your experiences, how can people of faith seek refuge faithfully? How can you do so in your daily life?

4 **Closing and prayer**

min Solicit prayer concerns from the group and then close in prayer, using your own or the sample prayer at right.

Remind the group of Daily Walk opportunities and plans for your next meeting.

Sample prayer

Gracious and loving God, we pray for Sawsan and her family and their community. We pray for all of your children in the Middle East and in the world. Keep us all in the palm of your loving hand. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

<p>Daily Walk An invitation to daily prayer and witness</p>	
<p>Daily Prayer: <i>Frame your daily walk with this series in prayer—feel free to use your own prayer or the one provided:</i> Holy God, let us always put our trust in you, our refuge and strength. Send your loving spirit to those in this broken world who know no safe place. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.</p>	<p>Daily Action: Available online: http://www.saltfilms.net/guides/garden-student.pdf</p> <p>Day 1) <i>Read Scripture:</i> Deuteronomy 19:1-10.</p> <p>Day 2) <i>Hear from a Holy Land Christian:</i> “The Sacred Place, the Sacred Time, and the Sacred Human Being” by Fr. Raed Abusahlia. http://www.lpj.org/Nonviolence/Raed/eng-article/Sanctuary.htm</p> <p>Day 3) <i>Learn more:</i> “The Truth Behind Formal Statistics,” from the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. http://www.icahd.org/eng/articles.asp?menu=6&submenu=2&article=198</p> <p>Day 4) <i>Be inspired:</i> Courage to Refuse. http://www.couragetorefuse.org/english/faq.asp</p> <p>Day 5) <i>Share:</i> Take time to tell someone new about how you’ve been moved this week by this Study Series. Invite him/her to pray with you.</p> <p>Day 6) <i>Act:</i> Help families keep their homes; support the Rebuilding Alliance. http://www.rebuildingalliance.org/who.php</p>