

## The Theology of Refuge-Part 1 Saint Patrick- A Model for Acceptance

Saint Patrick is a saint because he became a model for the church of what it means to be accepting of all people. The church is not a place for Christians to hide, it is a place for Christians to change so they can impact the world with the love of God. We refer to this 3-fold plan for the church as Refuge Theology. Let's talk about that as a group.

Have someone read I Samuel 22:1&2 and 23:1-5

Q: This story is a metaphor for what the church needs to look like. It needs to accept the broken, it needs to transform them into warriors, and then transformed people need to leave the cave and stand for their King. Do you think the church really looks like this? Why or why not?

A: Usually a church is good at one or two of those things, but not all three. If the church really was a force for loving change in the world, the world might look different. All three aspects have to happen (Refuge, Transformation and Partnership with God).

Q: In debt, in distress and discontent are the three descriptions of those who came seeking refuge. How are these people like those who come through the doors of churches today?

A: **In debt (Naw-shaw)** financial dire straits, not normal debt, but taken advantage of deluded, seduced (having an exactor); **In distress (Maw-tsoke')** a narrow place, confined and disabled; **Discontented (Maw-Raw')** bitterness, angry chaffed (also appetite for lust). These are the original meanings of these words. Let the group be creative in their ideas here.

Q: Church History illustrates this well with the story of Saint Patrick who, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, evangelized Ireland. When he came as a missionary at the age of 48 (then past the normal life expectancy) there were no Christians. When he left, thousands had converted and over 700 churches had been planted. How did Patrick apply the three stages of Refuge Theology?

A: He accepted people as they were. He invited them into ministry and allowed them to be transformed from the inside out. After they made a commitment to Christ, he asked them to make a commitment by committing to keeping the new church going so he (Patrick) could move on to the next town. Remember that Patrick accepted people before they believed, not after they believed.

Q: the Catholic Church was angry at Patrick for spending his time with Barbarians and sinners. What does this teach us about the cost of applying the Theology of Refuge today in the church?

A: Often the organized church resists reaching new people because they don't look like "us". We think that time spent doing church work is more important than building relationships with those Jesus misses. As a church we need to see ourselves as missionaries (partners with God) and those who work in the church as the equippers of the missionaries.

Q: Define what it means to be a person of refuge in light of this discussion.

In closing, would you be willing to share how you could better partner with God by engaging friends, neighbors and coworkers in a relationship of refuge?

## **The Theology of Refuge-Part 1 Saint Patrick- A Model for Acceptance**

Saint Patrick is a saint because he became a model for the church of what it means to be accepting of all people. The church is not a place for Christians to hide, it a place for Christians to change so they can impact the world with the love of God. We refer to this 3-fold plan for the church as Refuge Theology. Let's talk about that as a group.

Have someone read I Samuel 22:1&2 and 23:1-5

Q: This story is a metaphor for what the church needs to look like. It needs to accept the broken, it needs to transform them into warriors, and then transformed people need to leave the cave and stand for their King. Do you think the church really looks like this? Why or why not?

Q: In debt, in distress and discontent are the three descriptions of those who came seeking refuge. How are these people like those who come through the doors of churches today?

Q: Church History illustrates this well with the story of Saint Patrick who, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, evangelized Ireland. When he came as a missionary at the age of 48 (then past the normal life expectancy) there were no Christians. When he left, thousands had converted and over 700 churches had been planted. How did Patrick apply the three stages of Refuge Theology?

Q: the Catholic Church was angry at Patrick for spending his time with Barbarians and sinners. What does this teach us about the cost of applying the Theology of Refuge today in the church?

Q: Define what it means to be a person of refuge in light of this discussion.

In closing, would you be willing to share how you could better partner with God by engaging friends, neighbors and coworkers in a relationship of refuge?

