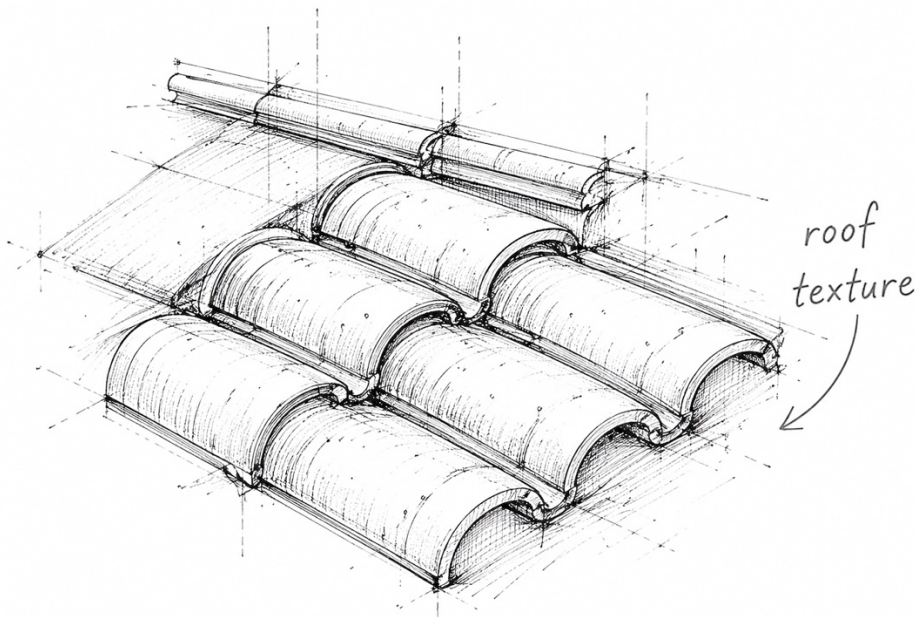


Chapter Nine



A PLACE OF REFUGE





SHELTER BENEATH THE ROOF

Scripture Focus: 2 Kings 4:8-36

There's something about that house on the corner that draws my heart back again and again. It wasn't the most impressive house on the block. The rooms weren't grand. The décor wasn't fancy.

But it had something better than that.

Love lived there.

And everyone knew it.

The coffee was always on, and someone was always stopping in to say hi. A friend from church. A neighbor from down the street. Someone who needed a listening ear, a warm meal, or simply a quiet place to sit for a while.

And then there was the guest room, just down the hall to the right.

Over the years, we had all kinds of people stay in that room. A missionary from Trinidad. Bible college students passing through. A single man who needed the comfort of family every now and then. People came with suitcases, stories, questions, burdens, and needs. And somehow, by God's grace, there was always room for one more.

That house taught me something I'll never forget. Refuge doesn't have to be grand to be meaningful. Sometimes it's as simple as a pot of coffee, an extra chair at the table, or a bed made up for a guest. A place where burdens don't feel quite as heavy. Fear loosens its grip. And the heart remembers it's not alone.

And some people carry refuge within them.

Not because they have more to offer, but because grace has done a quiet work in them.

They've learned kindness in hard places. Wisdom through surrender. Patience through waiting. Mercy from the very hand of God. Their presence becomes a soft place to land, not because they are the shelter, but because Christ is alive and gentle within them.

*Refuge doesn't
need to be grand
to be meaningful.*

These people are not perfect. They have walked through disappointments, struggles, and seasons of uncertainty just like everyone else. Yet there is something different about them. They have learned to rest in God's care, and that care

naturally spills over into the lives of those around them.

This is one of the beautiful results of the Holy Spirit's shaping work.

The apostle Paul writes that God "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4).

What a beautiful picture of God's design.

The comfort God gives us is never wasted. The mercy He has shown us teaches us to extend mercy to others. The strength He has provided helps us come alongside someone who is weary. The grace that once carried us becomes grace we are able to offer in return.

Not because we replace God as the refuge.

But because His love is working through us.

In many ways, God ministers to His people through the care of other believers. Through a kind word, a shared burden, or faithful encouragement, He reminds us that we are not walking through life alone. He often chooses ordinary people to display His extraordinary compassion.

This kind of ministry rarely draws attention to itself. It usually happens in everyday moments that might otherwise go unnoticed. A conversation after church. A visit to someone who is lonely. A note tucked inside a card. A quiet act of service performed without recognition. Yet these moments often leave a lasting impact because they reveal something of God's heart to those who need it most.

This is where faith once again takes center stage. Faith trusts God enough to make room for others. Faith serves even when it is inconvenient. Faith chooses compassion when self-interest would be easier. Faith believes that God can use even the smallest act of kindness to accomplish His purposes.

And perhaps most importantly, faith remembers where true refuge is found.

The safest place in all the world is not within human strength, wisdom, or ability. It is within the care of God Himself. Yet one of the ways He often demonstrates that care is through lives that have been shaped by His Spirit. As believers walk closely with Christ, they become instruments through which His comfort, encouragement, and love are experienced by others.

What a privilege this is.

The same God who gathers, shapes, and transforms His people also chooses to work through them. He takes the comfort they have received and allows them to share it. He takes the grace they have experienced and teaches them to extend it. He takes the love He has poured into their hearts and uses it to strengthen those around them.

Let's take these words to heart, ladies. Let's be women who live out our faith in real, tangible ways. Let's make a difference in our homes, our communities, and the world around us. Because when our faith is alive and active, it not only brings joy to us—it brings glory to God.

Word Study: Refuge

In Hebrews 6:18, believers are described as those “who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us.”

The Greek word translated as “fled for refuge” is καταφεύγω (katapheugō). It means to run toward shelter, to seek safety beneath protection, or to flee into a secure place during danger or uncertainty. The word carries the comforting image of someone escaping an approaching storm and finding safety within a strong refuge.

What a beautiful picture of the care God provides for His people.

The Lord never promised believers a life free from storms, sorrow, or hardship. Yet throughout Scripture, He repeatedly reminds His people that they are never abandoned beneath those storms. Through His presence, His promises, and the household of believers He gathers together, God faithfully provides shelter for weary hearts.

When the winds of life grow strong and uncertainty surrounds us, our hope is not found in our own strength or ability to endure. Our hope is found in the One who remains faithful through every season. He is our refuge, our shelter, and our secure foundation.

And little by little, the Holy Spirit teaches His people to rest more fully beneath the covering of the faithful Architect, trusting the One who never fails to guard His household.



 Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7. According to this passage, why does God comfort His people in their troubles, and how does that comfort become a blessing to others within the body of Christ?

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A Quiet Strength: The Shunammite Woman

Some acts of faith are easy to overlook because they happen far from the spotlight. No applause, no spotlight, no dramatic displays of power. Instead, they unfold in ordinary ways where simple acts of obedience quietly reveal the heart of God.

In 2 Kings 4, we're introduced to a woman from Shunem. Noticing that Elisha, a man of God, frequently passed through her town, she urged him to stay for a meal. But her kindness didn't stop there. Together with her husband, she prepared a small room for Elisha on the roof of their home and furnished it with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. It was nothing extravagant—simply a place where God's servant could rest whenever he came through town.

People like her remind us that it doesn't take much to be a place of refuge for others. What we need most of all are willing hearts and open hands. A meal shared around a table, a listening ear, a word of encouragement, or a place of rest can be a great comfort to someone walking through a difficult season.

And it doesn't always start with a room on a roof. Sometimes it begins with an outstretched arm and a warm cup of coffee. Sometimes it's a quiet act of service that lets someone know they are loved.

Throughout Scripture, we see God caring for His people through the kindness and faithfulness of others. He often works through ordinary men and women who simply make room in their lives for someone else. In doing so, they become instruments of His comfort, provision, and care.

All it takes are simple acts of obedience that quietly reveal the heart of God.

Someone who notices.

Someone who welcomes.

Someone who makes room.

As followers of Christ, we have the privilege of becoming that kind of refuge for others. Through simple acts of hospitality, kindness, and generosity, we reflect the heart of a God who welcomes the weary and provides shelter for those who seek Him. And often, the quiet acts that seem smallest to us become the very things God uses to encourage someone else along the way.



Faith in Action

Think of someone who may be carrying a burden today—a friend, neighbor, family member, or fellow believer. Take one practical step to encourage them. Send a note, make a phone call, offer a prayer, share a meal, or simply spend time listening.

As you do, remember that even small acts of kindness can become instruments of God's comfort. Ask the Lord to help you reflect His compassion and to use your encouragement to strengthen someone who needs it today.

Read 2 Kings 4:8–10. In what ways did the Shunammite woman demonstrate intentional hospitality, and what does her example teach us about making room in our lives to serve others?

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Has God ever used someone else's kindness, encouragement, or presence to remind you of His care? What did that experience teach you about the way He works through His people?

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The Prayer Closet

Think of one burden, fear, or uncertainty that has been weighing heavily on your heart lately. Instead of holding it tightly in isolation, intentionally place it before the Lord today and consider whether there may also be trusted believers He desires to use as part of His encouragement and support during this season.

Father in Heaven,

Thank You for being my refuge and shelter through every season of life. Thank You that I never face life's difficulties alone, because Your presence goes with me wherever I am.

Forgive me for the times I rely on my own strength instead of resting in Your care. Like Esther, help me trust You courageously in the places where You have called me, even when the path ahead is uncertain.

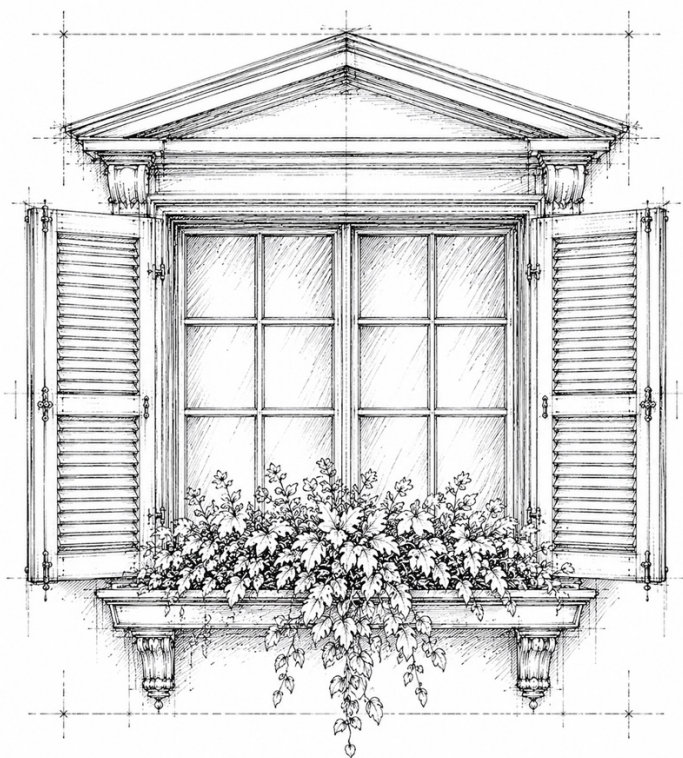
Thank You for the family of believers You have placed around me. Thank You for the encouragement, prayers, and support that come through Your people. Help me not only to receive those gifts with gratitude, but also to be a source of encouragement to others. Give me a compassionate heart, a willing spirit, and words that bring comfort and hope.

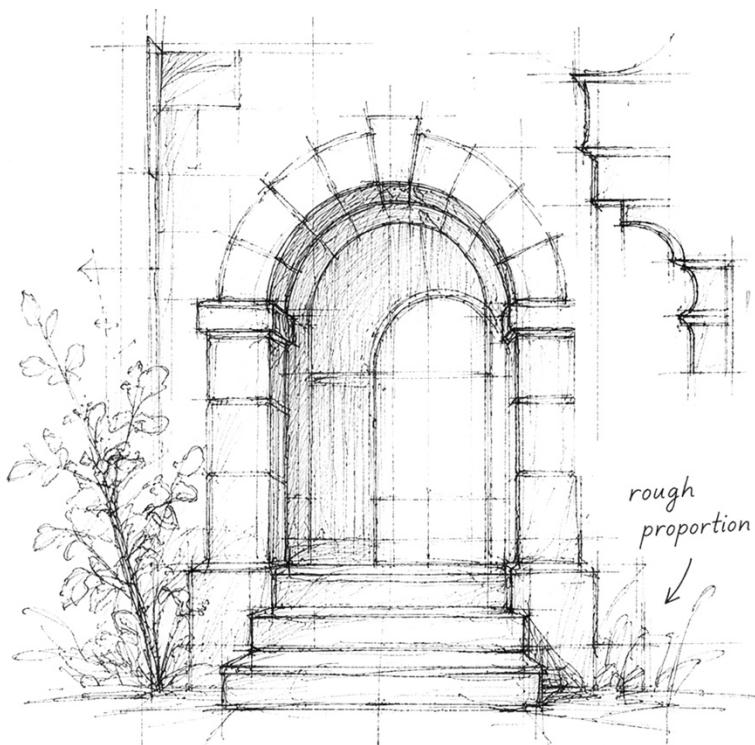
Remind me each day that true peace is found in trusting You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chapter Ten

HOMECOMING





HOME AT LAST

Scripture Focus: Genesis 12:1-9 & Hebrews 11:13-16

It's the little things that make all the difference. A tablecloth here. A counter wiped there. An extra blanket tucked into a basket near the back door, just in case the evening turns cool. These are small things, I know. Ordinary things. The kind of details a person could walk right past without seeing.

But when my children come over, I probably fuss more than I should.

I find myself thinking ahead to what they might like to eat, where the grandchildren will play, whether we'll have enough chairs around the table, enough coffee in the pot, enough room for everyone to settle in and stay awhile.

I suppose some of it may go unnoticed.

I can almost hear Michael saying, "Don't worry. No one's going to care."

And maybe he's right. Maybe they won't notice that the front steps were swept or that I packed their favorite drinks in the fridge. Maybe they won't notice the special dessert that I made, or the extra blanket nearby.

But I notice. And I care.

Because somewhere beneath all of those things is a longing to remind them that they're home.

It's a quiet kind of love, this nesting and preparing. We instinctively smooth the pillows and gather the favorites because we want the people we love to feel completely secure, welcomed, and known.

But there's a reason the comforts of home mean so much. They stir something deeper within us: our God-given longing to be home with Him.

The apostle John was given a glimpse of that day. In Revelation, he saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, "prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Then he heard a

loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:2–3).

God dwelling with His people.

This is where everything has always been leading. From the beginning, God planned to dwell with His people. Christ, our Cornerstone, made the way for us to enter His presence. And through every season, God has been preparing us for that day.

Abraham looked forward to this city. The prophets spoke of it. The apostles proclaimed its promise. Generation after generation of believers has walked by faith, holding tightly to the hope that God's promises would one day be fulfilled before their eyes.

That same hope belongs to us.

One day, the questions that trouble us now will no longer carry the same weight. We will look back and see that God was doing far more than we realized.

*There's a reason the
comforts of home
mean so much.*

*They stir something
deeper within us.*

The closed door. The unexpected delay. The season when we prayed and waited and wondered what He was doing.

None of it escaped His notice. None of it fell outside His care.

But the greatest joy of heaven will not be having every question answered. It will be seeing the One who called us and redeemed us.

We will see Him face to face.

John goes on to describe what life with God will be like: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4, NIV).

Can you imagine that?

No more painful goodbyes. No more weariness, fear, or loss. Everything that belongs to this broken world will be gone, and we will finally know perfect peace.

Word Study: Prepared

In Revelation 21:2, John describes the holy city, the New Jerusalem, “prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

The Greek word translated as “beautifully dressed” or “adorned” is κοσμέω (kosmeō). This word means to arrange carefully, set in order, prepare beautifully, or adorn with thoughtful design. It carries the picture of something lovingly prepared and placed exactly where it belongs.

What a beautiful ending to the work of the Master Craftsman.

Throughout this study, we have followed the gathering, shaping, strengthening, and preparation of the living stones within God’s household. Every lesson has pointed toward the same hope: God is preparing a home for His people, and He is preparing His people for that home.

Revelation reminds us that the work is moving toward a glorious completion. Nothing will remain unfinished, misplaced, or forgotten within the dwelling God has prepared. Every purpose will be fulfilled. Every promise will be complete. Every living stone gathered by grace will rest securely in the place the Architect prepared from the beginning.

And when the work is finally complete, the noise of the quarry will give way to everlasting peace in the presence of God, where His people will dwell with Him forever.



 When God created Adam and Eve, He walked with them in the garden (Genesis 3:8). What does this tell us about God's original design for His relationship with humanity, and how does that truth deepen your appreciation for His plan of redemption?

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A Quiet Strength: Sarah

Every journey has a destination. And so it is with our journey of faith.

From the very beginning, God has been leading His people toward a promised home. Through every trial, every season of waiting, every step taken in faith, His hand has been guiding the story toward a glorious completion when His people will dwell in His presence forever.

The men and women of Scripture understood this. They learned to hold the things of this world loosely because they knew they were only passing through. They experienced God's goodness along the way, yet their hearts were set on something beyond what their eyes could see. They were looking ahead to the fulfillment of every promise God made.

Sarah is a beautiful example of this kind of faith.

When the Lord called Abraham to leave his homeland, Sarah was right there beside him. Together they lived in tents, traveled through unfamiliar lands, and learned to trust promises that seemed far beyond human possibility.

There were seasons when the waiting must have felt long.

Years passed. Questions arose. Circumstances appeared to contradict what God had promised.

Yet the Lord remained faithful.

In time, Sarah witnessed the birth of Isaac and saw for herself that God's promises never fail. But even then, the fulfillment she experienced was only part of a much greater promise. Like Abraham, Sarah looked beyond the temporary realities of this world toward the future God had prepared for His people.

Her story reminds us that waiting is a natural part of our journey through faith. Sometimes God's promises seem distant, and some days the road ahead feels uncertain. Yet there is a hope for those who continue walking by faith, trusting the One who has called them.

We may not see what God has in store, or every turn in the road up ahead. But we can trust that the One who began this work is faithful to complete it.

And one day, the waiting will end. Every promise will find its fulfillment in Christ. God's people will dwell in His presence, forever and finally home.

Faith in Action

This week, look for a simple way to make someone feel welcomed, known, and cared for. It might be a handwritten note, a favorite treat, an invitation to coffee, or a phone call to someone who feels forgotten. As you do, remember that every act of hospitality points to the greater welcome God has prepared for His children. Let your kindness be a small reflection of the love He has shown to you.

❓ God's promise to Sarah was fulfilled in His timing, not her own. What does her story teach us about the relationship between faith, patience, and God's sovereign plan?

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❓ What circumstances in your life make it difficult to keep an eternal perspective, and how does the promise of God's presence encourage you to persevere in faith?

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The Prayer Closet

Think of one area where weariness, grief, or the long process of waiting has been weighing heavily on your heart. Instead of focusing only on the dust and difficulty of the present season, intentionally remind yourself today that the work of preparation is temporary and that the Lord is leading you toward an eternal home where His peace will never end.

Father in Heaven,

Thank You for the hope You have prepared for all who belong to You. Thank You that this life is not the end of the story, and that one day every sorrow, every struggle, and every season of waiting will be behind us.

Forgive me for the times I become so focused on today's concerns that I lose sight of the eternal home You have promised. Help me trust You in every season, knowing that Your plans are always guided by perfect wisdom and love.

Thank You for Your faithfulness through every step of the journey. Thank You for the ways You have carried me, strengthened me, and continued Your work within me even when I could not see what You were doing.

As I continue walking by faith, help me keep my eyes fixed on You. Deepen my longing for Your presence and fill my heart with hope for the day when I will see You face to face.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ANSWER KEY



Chapter 9

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7. According to this passage, why does God comfort His people in their troubles, and how does that comfort become a blessing to others within the body of Christ?

God comforts His people so they can comfort others who are facing difficulties. The comfort believers receive from God becomes a source of encouragement and strength within the body of Christ.

Read 2 Kings 4:8–10. In what ways did the Shunammite woman demonstrate intentional hospitality, and what does her example teach us about making room in our lives to serve others?

She welcomed Elisha into her home, provided meals, and prepared a furnished room for his use. Her example teaches us to serve others thoughtfully, generously, and with a willing heart.

Also notice that verse 8 says she “urged” him to stay for a meal. This shows us that she didn’t merely leave the door open; she lovingly made room for him, knowing that some people need a gentle nudge before they feel free to receive hospitality.

Has God ever used someone else's kindness, encouragement, or presence to remind you of His care? What did that experience teach you about the way He works through His people?

This answer will be different for everyone.



Chapter 10

When God created Adam and Eve, He walked with them in the garden (Genesis 3:8). What does this tell us about God's original design for His relationship with humanity, and how does that truth deepen your appreciation for His plan of redemption?

God created humanity for close fellowship with Himself. His plan of redemption reveals His desire to restore that relationship and dwell with His people forever.

God's promise to Sarah was fulfilled in His timing, not her own. What does her story teach us about the relationship between faith, patience, and God's sovereign plan?

Sarah's story teaches that faith trusts God's promises even when fulfillment seems delayed. Patience grows as we learn to rely on God's perfect timing and sovereign plan.

What circumstances in your life make it difficult to keep an eternal perspective, and how does the promise of God's presence encourage you to persevere in faith?

This answer will be different for everyone.