

God Cares When I Feel Unsafe

Quarter 5 • Lesson 10

Focus on Life Skills

- 1. Connecting:** Play the "Safe or Unsafe?" game.
- 2. Teaching:** Learn what makes people feel unsafe and how to feel more safe (Psalms 18:1–2; 56:5).
- 3. Responding:** Act out how to respond in an unsafe situation.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse poster
- Student Pages
- Crayons

Teacher Devotion

Turn to me and help me. I am lonely and hurting. Take away the troubles of my heart. Set me free from my great pain. Look at how I'm hurting! See how much I suffer! Take away all my sins. Look at how many enemies I have! See how terrible their hatred is for me! Guard my life. Save me. Don't let me be put to shame. I go to you for safety.

Psalm 25:16–20

In these verses the author, David, openly expresses his thoughts and feelings about all of the things that are going wrong in his life. Have you ever felt like this? Everyone goes through difficult times in their lives. Some situations may seem more difficult than others, but everyone experiences trauma. Trauma can lead to feelings of shame and guilt, even when you did nothing to bring it upon yourself.

When have you felt like David? Maybe part of his lament speaks to you more than the rest. Look closely at the words following his description of what is happening to him. His plea is for God to save him! In the midst of all of the swirling storm around him, David recognizes that only God can save him. The next time you feel unsafe due to outward or inward attacks, pray to God and ask Him for safety. Allow God to be your safe place.

Family Connection: Encourage families to talk about some of the things that happen in the community that might make them feel unsafe. Ask the families to share their thoughts about what they can do when these things happen.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play the "Safe or Unsafe?" game.

Welcome the children as they come to class. Ask them to name 1 stage of grief they remember from the previous class.

Last week, we talked about grief. Today, we will talk about some things that can make us feel like we are not safe. Another word for not being safe is "unsafe." Raise your hand if you have ever felt unsafe. Most of us feel unsafe at one time or another.

Teacher Tip: This game will show you which students already know some of the concepts you will teach today. Children might not provide the correct responses to all of the situations because they have not yet learned about what is safe and unsafe.

Let's play a game. I will read some situations. If you think the situation describes something safe, you will stand up tall. If you think the situation describes something that is unsafe, you will sit with your arms in front of your face. Let's practice this.

Safe—Stand up tall.

Unsafe—Sit and put your arms in front of your face.

Are you ready to play? Okay!

After reading each situation, pause for 15–30 seconds to allow children to respond. Then stand or sit with the children to show them the answer to each situation.

Someone I know offers to walk home from school with me. (Safe)

Someone I know offers me a pill to take, but I am not sick! (Unsafe)

I am at home with my little sister and mother, when 2 men I do not know walk in and start yelling at us. (Unsafe)

My mother and I shop together in the market. (Safe)

My older brother comes home angry. He comes toward me swinging his arms. (Unsafe)

Someone I know asks me to go with her to a place I have never been. She says my family is waiting there for me, but I have plans to meet my family at my uncle's house. (Unsafe)

Thank you for playing the game with me! You may sit down in your normal place now.

2. Teaching: Learn what makes people feel unsafe and how to feel more safe (Psalms 18:1–2; 56:5).

Today, we will discuss something that is not easy to talk about. We will talk about things that make us feel unsafe. First, let's talk about what feeling safe means.

- **What you do think it means to feel safe?**

Allow children to respond without correcting them. Their answers will help you know what they understand about safety.

- **How do you feel in your body when you feel safe?**

Children may respond with ideas like feeling warm, relaxed, or peaceful.

- **What emotions or thoughts do you have when you feel safe?**

Children may respond that they feel at peace, they can think clearly, they feel happy.

Feeling safe means that you do not expect anything to harm your emotions, thoughts, or body.

Similarly, when you feel unsafe, it may affect your body, thoughts, or emotions. You can feel physically unsafe when dangerous people or situations threaten you with physical harm. You can also feel unsafe in your thoughts and emotions when someone uses words to make you feel bad or scares you into thinking that something bad will happen. The Bible shows an example of how people can make us feel unsafe both physically and in our thoughts.

Read these verses directly from your Bible.

*All day long they twist my words.
They are always making plans to destroy me.*
Psalm 56:5

In this example, people make the psalmist feel unsafe in his thoughts because of what they are saying about him. He also feels physically unsafe because he knows people are planning to hurt him. Take a minute to think about a time when you felt unsafe. If you cannot think of a time, then think of a situation that would make you feel unsafe.

Give the children 1 minute to think about times when they felt unsafe.

Teacher Tip: Thinking about traumatic situations may be difficult for the children in your class. If you notice any children who are crying or who look uncomfortable with this activity, do not force them to participate in the next set of questions. They may listen quietly instead.

You do not need to share out loud what made you feel unsafe. But you will need to think about that situation to answer the following questions.

- **Raise your hand if you thought of something that made you feel physically unsafe.**
- **Raise your hand if you thought of something that made you feel unsafe in your thoughts or emotions.**
- **Raise your hand if you felt unsafe in your body, your thoughts, and your emotions.**

When you feel unsafe, you can also experience many different emotions.

- **How did you feel when the unsafe event happened, and how did your body react?**

Answers may include that they felt angry, sad, hurt, dizzy, shaky, or scared. Some children may say they did not feel any emotions at all.

- **What emotions do you feel now when you think about the unsafe event? How does your body react to the event when you think about it?**

Answers may include that they feel angry, sad, hurt, dizzy, shaky, or scared. Some children may say they do not feel any emotions at all.

People can react differently when they are unsafe than they would if they felt safe. Some people may freeze in place. Others may run. Others may try to fight. The things that caused you to feel unsafe can also affect your emotions. If someone hurt you, you may feel scared, angry, or sad. If you went through a terrible storm, you might feel worried. Or you might not feel any emotion. These are all normal reactions to scary situations.

Teacher Tip: There may be some children in your class who experience trauma in their daily lives. These children may never feel safe. If a child wants to share something with you that makes her feel unsafe, offer to speak with her after class. If possible, get help for that child.

Do you remember the true story from the Bible of David and Saul? Saul chased David and tried to kill him! David had served Saul and was friends with Saul's son Jonathan. But Saul became jealous of him and chased after him! David had been hiding for a long time, when Saul finally found him! David did not hurt Saul and Saul did not hurt David. That is when the Bible tells us David sang these words:

*I love you, LORD. You give me strength.
The LORD is my rock and my place of safety.
He is the God who saves me. My God is my rock. I go to him for safety.*
Psalm 18:1–2

God is a safe place! There are so many things in the world that can hurt us. I do not need to tell you what some of these things are because you already know and experience things that are unsafe. When sin came into the world, so did the bad things that can hurt us.

- **What can you do when you feel unsafe?**

Allow 3–4 children to respond. It is important that you affirm the children's ideas while gently guiding them to understand which answers will keep them safe. If a child responds with something that is not safe, you may choose to say something like "I appreciate your thought. How might that keep you safe?" It is okay to move on if a child is not sure how to respond.

There are many ways you can help yourself to be and feel safer.

1. Pray and ask God to help you. When you feel unsafe, but you are not sure what to do, you can ask God to help you. Say a quick prayer in your mind for God to help you act in a way that will help you to find safety. If you feel unsafe in your emotions or thoughts, ask God to help you to feel safe again.

2. Tell an adult you trust about things that make you feel unsafe. This person can help you find ideas and other people to help you to protect yourself. Everyone experiences scary events at some time in their lives, but there are people who care about you and want you to be safe.

Teacher Tip: If you know of adults in your community who are safe for children to go to, tell your children about these people. If your church has a child safety program, let the children and their families know about it.

3. Run or move quickly in the other direction. If someone who you think might be unsafe is coming toward you, get away from him as quickly as possible if you can. If you are somewhere where you can run away, run. If you are somewhere where there are a lot of people, get as low to the ground as you can and move quickly away from the person you think may hurt you. By moving quickly away from someone who may be dangerous, you can get away and find a safer place to be. Think of a time when you felt really safe.

- **Where were you?**

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

When you find a safe place, you can think about the situation you are in and figure out what you can do next.

4. You can also scream at the top of your voice and ask for help.

5. If you feel unsafe in your emotions or thoughts and no one is trying to physically hurt you, calm yourself down by doing one of the following:

- **Take 3 deep breaths.**

Lead the children in slowly breathing in and out 3 times.

- **Count backwards slowly from 10.**

Lead the children in slowly counting backward: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

- **Sing a song or say a Bible verse. You could use the memory verse from this unit.**

Sing a happy song you know or recite the memory verse at the end of this lesson with the children.

3. Responding: Act out how to respond in an unsafe situation.

Let's act out what we can do in unsafe situations. For this activity, I will assign each of you a group and a role to act out. You will pretend your group is a family. Some of you will pretend to be mothers, others will be fathers, and some will be children. Then I will tell you a quick story and let you act out how to help each other feel safe.

Create groups of 3–5 children. Assign each child a role. Be sure each group has either a mother or a father. Then identify the remaining children as older or younger siblings within each pretend family.

Now I will tell you a situation. Pretend that your family is sitting at home. Suddenly, there is loud noise outside! You feel the earth shake. The walls in your home crack! You wait for the ground to stop shaking and then look out the window and see fallen buildings nearby. As you act, think about these questions.

- What will your family do?
- How will you stay safe?

You have 5 minutes to act out what your family will do.

Walk around the “family” groups as they act out the situation. Encourage those who are choosing good ways to feel safe. Help redirect any children who are not following the instructions for the task or who may not know what they can do to feel safe.

Teacher Tip: Some children are very comfortable pretending to be in a situation they might not have experienced. Other children may struggle with this. Walk around your teaching space and observe the children acting out the situation. If any of them are struggling, talk to them a little bit about what they might feel if this happened to them.

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, give the children crayons and allow 5 minutes for them to draw pictures of children doing something safe in the situation.

Thank you for showing what you would do if your family experienced this situation. I appreciate your thoughts and ideas. Remember, God cares about you when you feel unsafe. You can always pray to Him and ask Him for help. Our memory verse today reminds us that God brings us hope.

Show the Memory Verse poster if you are using it.

*My spirit, why are you so sad?
Why are you so upset deep down inside me?
Put your hope in God. Once again I will have reason to praise him.
He is my Savior and my God.
Psalm 42:11*

Read each of the following parts of the verse again as you show the children the motions for this verse. Then, repeat the motions with the children 3 times.

My spirit, why are you so sad?—Motion to yourself. Then frown.

Why are you so upset deep down inside me?—Shrug your shoulders. Then pull your arms toward your heart.

Put your hope in God—Smile and point up to the sky with your hands.

Once again I will have reason to praise him—Motion yes. Bring your hands together as if in prayer.

End class by saying this blessing, based on Psalm 25:20, over the children.

Blessing: May you trust that God wants to help you. May you trust Him to be your safe place.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter’s song, if possible.

“Great Are You Lord” by All Sons and Daughter: <https://youtu.be/vQLMnPYoR9k>