



**When We  
Need Help  
Staying Safe**



# God Is With Us: When We Need Help Staying Safe

## Main Idea

**You always deserve to be safe and in charge of your body.**

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## BIBLE CONNECTIONS

### Psalm 27:1-3

The LORD is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone? The LORD is a fortress protecting my life. Should I be frightened of anything? When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up—it's they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall! If an army camps against me, my heart won't be afraid. If war comes up against me, I will continue to trust in this.

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## BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

As faith leaders for children, we have a desire to serve, teach children, grow in spiritual leadership, and develop the community of God. This work includes keeping children, some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, safe. The idea of safety includes a lot of things, and one of the most difficult to talk about or address is safety from abuse.

We know that one in nine girls and one in fifty-three boys under the age of eighteen experience sexual abuse or assault at the hands of an adult. An estimated 702,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 2014, the most recent year of national data. Most of these instances were at the agency of family members or other trusted adults, making it difficult for children to understand what has happened or advocate for themselves. There are many things a church community can contribute to children's safety, including implementing a Safe Sanctuaries Policy that outlines how the church will deal with instances of suspected child abuse. Training adults to recognize and respond to signs of abuse is extremely important. It is also important to empower children in your community by teaching them three important principles: 1) your body belongs to you, 2) trust your feelings of discomfort or fear, 3) this is a safe place to talk to a trusted adult if you feel uncomfortable or afraid. These

are helpful and empowering principles for all children, regardless of whether they are experiencing abuse.

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## GATHERING ACTIVITY

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*Practicing Safe and Respectful Boundaries with the Ha-la-la-la-la-la-la-lelujah Song*

**Say:** God made us all, and that means God made our bodies. Our bodies are special gifts, and each person is in charge of his or her own body. Jesus taught us, “You should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.” We always need to be respectful of other people’s bodies. That means we need to be in the habit of asking people before we give them a hug or pat on the back, or come too close to their personal space. Sometimes people may not want us to touch them. They might be sick, or stressed out, or they might not like to be touched by people they don’t know very well. Let’s practice asking each other before we greet each other with a touch. When the song gives you an instruction, like “Shake a friend’s hand” or “Hug a friend’s neck,” find a friend and ask, “Can I shake your hand?” or “May I hug your neck?” It may feel silly, but the more you practice, the more natural it will be!

Watch and dance to the *Ha-la-la-la-la-la-la-lelujah* song together:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7zh\\_yCar48](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7zh_yCar48)

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## STORY CONNECTION

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**Say:** Did you know that Jesus really liked to hang out with kids? In Matthew, there is a story about a time when Jesus was in Judea, going from place to place teaching people how to live and healing those who needed it. One day some families who had been hearing about Jesus and listening to his wisdom brought their children to him. The parents and kids wanted Jesus to pray for them and bless them. But Jesus’ disciples didn’t think that was a good idea. They got on to the parents, maybe saying things like, “He doesn’t have time for this!”

**Ask:** Have you ever had an adult act like you weren’t welcome because you’re young? Have you had an adult make you feel unsafe?

**Say:** Jesus turned around and scolded the disciples! He *did* want to see the kids! Jesus liked kids and wanted them to be part of his ministry. He wanted to love and take care of them, and stood up to other adults on their behalf.

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

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**PRACTICE AND REFLECTION**

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*Red Light, Green Light*

One learner is chosen to be the “stoplight.” The other learners stand on the starting line, and the stoplight has their back to the rest of the players. When the stoplight says, “Green light,” the players try to walk as fast as they can to the finish line.

When the stoplight says, “Red light,” they turn around and players have to stop in their tracks. If the stoplight catches another learner moving, they are sent back to the starting line. The first person to cross the finish line wins and becomes the new stoplight.

**Say:** When we play this game we can practice saying stop and go and yes and no. We also practice listening to our friends when they tell us to stop or go. When it comes to our bodies, we can say yes or no whenever we need to, just like in the game. Just because we’ve said yes to a hug or a pat on that back before, doesn’t mean we can’t say no the next time the person asks. If someone touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, it’s always okay to say, “Please stop.”

*Read Your Body Belongs to You*

Purchase or check out a copy of *Your Body Belongs to You* by Cornelia Spelman [https://www.amazon.com/Your-Belongs-Cornelia-Maude-Spelman/dp/0807594733/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1495832380&sr=1-1&keywords=your+body+belongs+to+you](https://www.amazon.com/Your-Belongs-Cornelia-Maude-Spelman/dp/0807594733/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1495832380&sr=1-1&keywords=your+body+belongs+to+you)

Read the story together.

*Send home the “Practice and Reflection at Home” sheet on page 4 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.*

**Supplies:**

- *Your Body Belongs to You* by Cornelia Spelman

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**PRACTICE AND REFLECTION AT HOME**

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Today your child reflected on how God is with us when we need help staying safe from unwanted touches. This is one of life's toughest matters. It's difficult to navigate healthy and safe boundaries as adults in our own relationships, and it can be even more difficult to know how and when to talk to our kids about how they can be protected from abuse. Before you continue to reflect at home, take a minute to check in with yourself. What are some of the emotions that come up when you think about harm to children? Try writing down a word or two about what you are feeling or what comes to mind when you hear the words *staying safe*.

If you have reason to believe that your child has been touched or spoken to inappropriately, please ask for help. Counselors and social workers can help families heal, help children make sense of an abusive experience, and protect other children and communities.

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**FURTHER READING**

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To learn and reflect more how God is with us when we need help staying safe, read 1 John 3. This letter from the apostle describes healthy relationships and community for people of faith.