

THE EXILED

Distribute **Bibles** and invite group members to turn together to Psalms 42 and 43. Explain:

- For part of their history, the Jewish people were exiled from their Palestinian homeland and carried off to live for 70 years in the foreign country of Babylon.
- These were dark days for the Jewish refugees. Psalms 42 and 43 reflect this experience.

Read Psalms 42 and 43. Discuss:

- What different feelings does the psalmist experience?
- What does the psalmist hope for?
- How does the psalmist feel about God?
- What does the psalmist ask of God?
- To what extent do you think these psalms reflect the experience of today's refugees?
- Who *are* today's refugees? Who are the refugees in our community? our country? our world? (Review the information provided in Refugee Realities in the next column.)
- What special challenges do refugees face? What barriers do they face, which most of us do not?

REFUGEE REALITIES

- Refugees are people forced to leave their country by war, persecution, racism, natural disaster or economics. Most face life without the security, status or comfort they left behind.
- Worldwide, there have been tens of millions of refugees since 1901, the start of the century, causing some historians to label the 20th century the "age of the refugee."
- Wars result in refugees. The Viet Nam War produced over 2 million refugees. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 turned 6 million people into refugees. The Korean War caused 9 million people to flee their homes for asylum in other countries.
- Experts estimate that by 1991 16 million people were refugees around the world.
- Canada, Australia and the United States have traditionally welcomed the greatest number of the world's refugees. Increased competition for jobs and economic resources have caused many countries to question or limit their refugee policies. Some, like Switzerland and Japan, either forbid asylum for refugees or limit immigration of any type.