

Session 4

Being a refugee or internally displaced person

When a country has been taken over by war, the people may need to leave that place to stay safe. Some travel away from their home town but stay in the same country: this is called being displaced. Others need to leave their country and go to a different country to stay safe: that is called being a refugee.

Since the war began almost seven million refugees (<https://bit.ly/4iOWVyO>) have fled the Ukraine, while an estimated 3.7 million others have been displaced within the country (<https://bit.ly/4kYrIVk>).

Families fleeing from the war in Ukraine have been placed in the UK and Europe. Some of those who are displaced have travelled to Transcarpathia. There are several organisations which help: the UN Refugee Agency works to provide protection and assistance and the Christian churches are involved in providing for the needs of those arriving and living in their communities.

Often, children and their families don't have a lot of warning before they must leave somewhere and can only take a few precious items with them.

Viola, 13, describes the moment bombing started: "Smoke filled the kitchen where mama was standing; she was trying to put out the flames. She told us to leave. I grabbed my sister and we ran. We didn't even have time to look back at our house and we didn't know where we were going. Eventually someone helped us to evacuate."



Homelessness: Some families find themselves homeless after fleeing their home town. Those helping to host refugees and displaced people may need to stop their offer of accommodation or funding resulting in previously settled people being made homeless. This means daily

life for a young child living homeless is hard. They feel cold and hungry and live in fear of people taking what little they have. Those that do find themselves housed may find themselves housed with many others and so have to share a bedroom or even a bed with others.

Dimitri describes what it's been like since he fled his home: "I have changed a lot since these past 12 months (since the war began). I started to understand how good it is to have a home."



Separation from others:

Not all families and pets can flee together. Some remain behind, living in fear of homes being destroyed and of being hurt.

Families become separated: elderly grandparents may be too elderly to move and men are called away to fight, often away for months at a time. Alexander describes what it's like to be separated from his father. "My father was not able to come home until nine months into the war. He told me that I had to be as strong as him."

Being separated from loved ones can be sad and traumatic. The Red Cross and other charities help separated families to communicate by providing free phones, phone calls and written messages.

Schooling: One young girl whose school was bombed said, "It's very sad because this used to be my second home. I'm getting upset coming here and seeing my school in such condition." Since the war started 700,000 young children are registered in schools, but 600,000 are still not able to attend. It could be the curriculum is different to the school they were attending or it's too far to travel to the nearest school. Often the children who are homeless are relied upon to help the family to find food, water and money and so do not have time to attend school. Although language and cultural differences have left some feeling isolated, attending school has helped many children to feel settled in their new community.



Bible link: Leviticus 25:35

“If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.”

- I wonder how you can support others
- I wonder if you can remember any Bible stories where people have been helped
- I wonder how God is helping those who are poor and unable to support themselves

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for our homes, our families and our friends. Help us to appreciate all that we have. Show us how to be compassionate and help those who have lost everything to war. Loving God, please bring peace, love and togetherness to families hurt and separated by war. **Amen.**

Active prayer: Pack a bag

Have ready some words or items which help to reflect a warm welcome e.g. love, peace, homes, togetherness, school, comfort (you can add others) and a rucksack/suitcase. As you pray, invite others to place things into the bag. You could encourage those in the group to come up with their own prayers for each item. You may need to model this for them first.

Activity: Canvas bags

Those who have been made homeless have a new appreciation for the home they left behind. Let's decorate a bag with all that we appreciate about the home and town we live in.

Take a few moments to think about what you most appreciate about your home and town. Use fabric pens to decorate the bag. (Place a piece of cardboard inside the bag before starting so the ink doesn't bleed to the other side.) There may be space to write something on your bag about all you've learnt about refugees/displaced people.



Greta wonders:

- What precious items you would take if you had to flee your home without warning?
- What is it that you appreciate about your home and the town you live in?
- What would you miss, or not miss, particular about your school?

Activity: Crescent cookies

(The dough could be prepared beforehand and put in the fridge. To ensure the group get to join in with the whole process of this recipe but do not have to wait the two hours for the dough to rise, the group could make the dough and then set that aside and continue using the preprepared dough.)

Sift 425g wheat flour into a bowl, add 230g chopped up butter and mix using your fingers until it resembles breadcrumbs. Gradually add 140ml sour cream to the breadcrumbs and mix to create a dough. The soft elastic dough will need to be covered in cling film and chilled for two hours. Divide the dough into three parts and roll out each one on a floured surface until about 1/2 cm thick and cut into squares. Brush the squares with a fruit jam. Roll the biscuit shape from corner to corner and bend into a crescent shape; you may need to pinch the edge into the roll. Repeat for all the dough and arrange on some baking parchment on a baking sheet. Cook at 210 degrees for 15 minutes. Once cooled, decorate by sprinkling some icing sugar over them.

If you want to make this in three groups you could reduce the recipe quantities to 140g flour/70g butter/40ml soured cream.



Action point: Many people who flee their country can generally take very little with them when they leave. There are charities which help support refugees by donating bags with essential items in. Find out about some of these charities.

<https://bit.ly/4kL4et0>

