First Things First

- This is one of the 15 songs of ascent. They were used during pilgrim festivals. Some believe one was sung for each of the 15 steps leading up to the temple.

- Zion is a code word for the dwelling place of God

- Scepters were used by rulers as signs of their authority over others

Going Deep

1) This is a short but powerful psalm filled with images of security, strength and stability. One image concerns Mount Zion, a second concerns mountains surrounding Jerusalem and a third mentions a scepter of wickedness being unable to remain where God's people are. Which of these three images is most meaningful to you? Why?

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2) Like Negro Spirituals, many of the psalms were sung by Jews to get them through hard times. Why might people who have experienced hard times sing a song about God empowering them to withstand trouble as they make their way to the place of worship?

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3) Although verse three says that wickedness won't remain in the places that God has set aside for God's people, it never promises that wicked influences wouldn't work hard at taking control of those areas. What are some areas of your life that God has set aside for you that wicked influences are trying to control?

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4) How can God's people become more like God and become a mountain range that gives the members what they need to remain committed to God and God's call on their lives regardless of what happening in the world around them?

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5) Music, prayer and meditation have been used by human beings of different cultures and religious backgrounds to reinforce what they believe for as long as humans have existed. The psalm from today's lesson as been sung, prayed and used for meditation by Jews and Christians for generations. It is often read, prayed or sung out loud during Jewish and Christian holidays. Why do you think this particular psalm is chosen for public worship so often?

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