

Sanctuary First

A PLACE TO BE

Discussion questions

Songs of Sanctuary - August 2018 (29 July - 1 September)

This month we are going to invite you to read the Bible with your headphones in...

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [Songs of Sanctuary Resource Pack](#) to help adapt the material for small group work. These questions are just a guideline and there is no need to go through all questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose what interests your group.

Because this month's theme is about music and making connections between biblical readings and the songs we know and love - the discussion questions for this month all relate to music. If leading a small group you might want to prepare a set up so that you can listen to songs together or give the participants advance warning in case they would like to bring music along with them.

Part 1: A broken Hallelujah		
<p>The Bible is full of the kind of people pop songs are written about: flawed, desperate and quirky souls full of longing and regret, heartache and desire. In other words - people like you and I.</p> <p>An icebreaker:</p> <p>When and where do you listen to music?</p> <p>Do you ever pray and listen to music at the same time?</p>	<p>Read 2 Samuel 11: 1-15</p> <p>Leonard Cohen's haunting 'Hallelujah' directly references 2 Samuel 11 in the second verse and uses a range of other biblical imagery, including a reference to Judges 16, when Samson allows his hair to be cut. Cohen does not see these moments of profound weakness or moral failing as a means of cutting ourselves off from the divine. Instead he imagines them as moments where even in the midst of despair - we can glimpse God.</p> <p>These lines are from Cohen's song:</p> <p>"And it's not a cry that you hear at night / It's not somebody who's seen the light / It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah"</p> <p>How do you feel about a "cold" and "broken" Hallelujah? Have you ever found yourself saying a cold and broken Hallelujah? What do you think Cohen is getting at here?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 14</p> <p>This Psalm is a protest song, calling out corrupt evildoers. Does it remind you of any protest songs?</p> <p>What does this psalm have in common (in terms of style, content and ethos) with the the popular protest songs of the 20th century?</p>

Part 2: Don't shoot the messenger!		
<p>Are there particular songs that aren't about the Bible or Christianity per say - but that always remind you of Biblical characters or themes?</p> <p>Do you ever read the Bible and listen to music at the same time?</p> <p>If so, how does it work for you, what do you like to listen to as you read?</p> <p>Do you read Leviticus while listening to Swedish Death Metal? Or Ganger Rap while reading 1 and 2 Kings?</p>	<p>Read 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13</p> <p>In this reading Nathan has a rather difficult message to convey. He softens David up with a story allowing him to raise the subject indirectly. Songs are often used in the same disarming way, to make it easier to tackle difficult subjects.</p> <p>Can you think of examples of when a popular song has covered a difficult or thorny topic? Did the song help soften the blow?</p> <p>Has a song ever changed your mind about something?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 51: 1-12</p> <p>People often turn to music to find sanctuary and comfort when they are upset.</p> <p>What music do you listen to when you feel like David does in this psalm?</p> <p>When you are sad do you prefer to listen to happy music or sad music?</p>

Part 3: Strange times		
<p>Read 2 Samuel 18: 19-33</p> <p>The song 'Ain't No Sunshine' by Bill Withers, about longing for someone who may or may not be coming back, beautifully illustrates the desolation of loss - as being without sunshine. The third verse of the song repeats the phrase 'I know' 26 times, capturing the circularity of grief, like David in the reading repeating the phrase 'My son' over and over again.</p> <p>There seems to be something in both the repetition within song lyrics and musical phrases and the ability to repeat songs - playing them back or singing them over and over - that is particularly comforting in times of grief.</p> <p>Why is this the case?</p>	<p>Read 1 Kings 19: 1-8</p> <p>Can you think of a song that's about giving up, or finding strength - or both?</p> <p>As a group, draw parallels between the song and the reading.</p>	<p>Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2</p> <p>Do our words give grace to those who hear?</p>

Part 4: Growing pains		
<p data-bbox="164 230 411 264">Read I Kings 3: 5-10</p> <p data-bbox="164 302 560 436">In this reading Solomon is all too aware of his youth and lack of experience. He demonstrates self-awareness and vulnerability.</p> <p data-bbox="164 474 523 712">A lot of music, pop music in particular, centres around the concerns and anxieties of the young - the struggles found seeking a partner, proving yourself, or wising up through life's lessons.</p> <p data-bbox="164 750 531 920">Can you think of any songs, perhaps from your youth, that captured the vulnerability of being a young person trying to make their way in the world?</p>	<p data-bbox="590 230 842 264">Read Proverbs 9: 1-6</p> <p data-bbox="590 302 979 472">David Bowie's song 'Changes' is about the discomfort and disorientation of growing older and experiencing life's changes. See these lines from the chorus:</p> <p data-bbox="590 510 979 815">"Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes (Turn and face the strange) Ch-ch-Changes Don't want to be a richer man Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes (Turn and face the strange) Ch-ch-Changes Just gonna have to be a different man"</p> <p data-bbox="590 853 954 920">What do you think 'turning to face the strange' means?</p> <p data-bbox="590 958 992 1234">Can you draw a connection between these lines and the call in verse 6 of the reading to lay aside immaturity? Is growing in maturity, living and walking 'in the way of insight', in some way a process of turning to face the strange?</p>	<p data-bbox="1021 230 1310 264">Read Ephesians 5: 15-20</p> <p data-bbox="1021 302 1410 369">Verse 16 from the reading could be a song lyric created today:</p> <p data-bbox="1021 407 1410 474">"...making the most of the time, because the days are evil."</p> <p data-bbox="1021 512 1422 580">What would the rest of this song sound like?</p> <p data-bbox="1021 618 1241 645">Would you sing it?</p> <p data-bbox="1021 683 1401 786">If Paul was a songwriter today, what genre would he fit in, who would he sound like?</p> <p data-bbox="1021 824 1394 891">Is Paul a punk? Or a slam poet? Or a hippy?</p>

Part 5: Songs of Sanctuary		
<p>As the theme draws to a close, we turn specifically to think about being in the sanctuary. Those moments when we rest in the presence of God.</p> <p>Read Psalm 84</p> <p>What songs or music help you find solace, respite, or rest?</p>	<p>Ephesians 6: 10-20</p> <p>Movies often have a 'fight song' that moment when the protagonist is psyching themselves up (think: training montage).</p> <p>Runners often make playlists with songs that help them push that bit further, that bit harder.</p> <p>This armour of God riff in the reading is a great fight song.</p> <p>What song psyches you up, and pushes you on?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 34:15-22</p> <p>Verse 18 of the reading says, "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted".</p> <p>Read these lines from Gregory Porter's 'Take Me To The Alley',</p> <p>"They will be surprised When they hear him say</p> <p>Take me to the alley Take me to the afflicted ones Take me to the lonely ones That somehow lost their way..."</p> <p>If the King suddenly came back today in your neighbourhood - where would you take him? Where would God ask to go?</p>