

# Sanctuary First

A PLACE TO BE

## Discussion questions

### Voices Reshaping The World September 2018 (2-29 September)

This month we begin to think about the many voices that seek to shape our world. We want to highlight contemporary voices that are speaking of hope, freedom, wisdom, and generosity.

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [Voices Reshaping The World 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.

Part 1: The voices of Hope in a world of Uncertainty		
<p>Read Song of Solomon 2: 8-13</p> <p>These romantic verses speak of the hopes of a longing heart being fulfilled - there is a dramatic agency to "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."</p> <p>When the news often seems bleak it is good to remember to listen to hopeful voices.</p> <p>What voices in contemporary society do you hear calling us to arise and come away, to (so to speak) 'wake up and smell the roses'?</p> <p>It could be a politician or an activist, a poet or a singer; perhaps someone in your local community or perhaps in your family.</p>	<p>Read James 1: 23-27</p> <p>The analogy of the mirror is striking. What do you see when you look in the mirror?</p> <p>There is an intriguing tension in the definition of pure religion in verse 27. On the one hand we are called to get stuck in - to care for those on the margins, on the other hand we are called to keeping oneself 'unstained by the world'. How do you address the troubles of the world while remaining 'unstained' by it?</p>	<p>Read Romans 5: 1-6</p> <p>In these verses Paul argues that hope is born of suffering, endurance and character.</p> <p>What is 'character'?</p> <p>Can you think of a time in your life (it may be right now) that was, or continues to be, 'character building'?</p>

Part 2: The voices of Freedom in a world of Oppression		
<p>Read Psalm 146</p> <p>Are verses 3 and 4 arguing that we should be sceptical of people in positions of power?</p>	<p>Read James 2: 1-17</p> <p>In what ways do we 'dishonour the poor' (see verse 6) in our lives? In our neighbourhoods? In our country?</p>	<p>Read Proverbs 22: 8-9</p> <p>How can we better share our bread with the poor?</p> <p>Think of concrete examples of things we could do to be more generous.</p>

Part 3: The voices of Wisdom in a world of Fools		
<p>Read Job 23: 1-9</p> <p>How do you feel, reading the words of Job's complaint?</p> <p>Does any of it resonate with how you have felt in the past or how you are currently feeling?</p> <p>Is it surprising that such a bitter complaint is in the Bible?</p>	<p>Read Amos 5: 10-15</p> <p>What would it mean in your life - to follow the instructions of verses 14 and 15?</p> <p>What changes, if any, would you need to make?</p>	<p>Read Mark 10: 17-27</p> <p>This story, of a rich man wanting to know what he can do to get eternal life, is a familiar one.</p> <p>Let's focus on just two words in one verse - verse 21. <i>Jesus, looking at him, <b>loved him</b> and said, 'You lack one thing; go sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'</i></p> <p>What do you think is being conveyed in highlighting that detail of Jesus looking at the rich man with love? How does it affect how we read what Jesus says to the man? How does your Bible translate that verse?</p>

## Part 4: The voices of Generosity in a world of Greed

Read Mark 9: 33-37

Are we welcoming in our day to day lives? Do we make an effort to include others? In our homes? In our work? In our church? In our community?

Read Psalm 1

It can be all too easy to 'sit in the seat of scoffers' (see verse 1), to stand back and be cynical - but it is an ultimately unhappy place to be.

Has the church sometimes been guilty itself of occupying the seat of scoffers? Sitting back in judgement on others rather than going to the stream and braving the weather like the tree that bears fruit in verse 3?

What do the stream and the fruit represent in verse 3? (There could be a number of right answers, it's not about guessing 'the right one').

Read James 3: 13-18

Public debate and discussion is often very hostile and shrill - with people talking past one another, unwilling to listen to each other.

How can we practice a generous wisdom as described in verse 17?