

### THINKING OF SINGING

Here are four studies to be done over the next two months if possible.

Leading the group will be much easier if you have worked through each of the questions beforehand, far enough in advance to ask for clarification or advice if you get stuck.

It will require a little discipline on the part of two groups of people.

Those who naturally use the expressive pathway may feel that to reflect on the content of songs spoils them. It may help them to consider that it is the truth in a song that sets us free and that many of the psalms that we use were originally songs.

Those for whom singing is a bit of a chore and prefer to deal with thoughts, ideas or stories. Singing is a non-negotiable part of our life here and our forever future.

Both groups need to decide to enjoy and benefit from what we are doing.

We are consumers of other people's praise. Hopefully these studies will help us to become creators of our own.

It would make sense to do the study early on in the meeting and let the worship arise from it. Even so it would be good to have some opportunity for people to share before you get into it so that every person present has heard the sound of their own voice.

First listen to each song without handing out the words. You can print out the words locally or ask the office to do it for you. Then listen to it at least once more before looking at the questions.

## **Week One—Almighty God by Tim Hughes**

We start off with one we know. After listening to the song ask people, individually, to underline words or phrases that impact them and to add another word or phrase that connects. It could be as basic as underlining 'rain' and adding snow or perhaps noting 'responds to your glory' and linking it to 'falls down and worships'. As an act of prayer, play the song quietly and invite people to speak out the words they have underlined and added. Read Luke 19:37-40 and ask people to talk about how they feel about their own life of praise to God. What constrains them or releases them in praise. As an alternative divide your group into disciples and critics. Allow each group to ask questions of the others about their responses. Read Psalm 8 and Psalm 19:1-6. Where has Tim Hughes been influenced by these Psalms. Is there anything people think he would have benefited from including even if it made the song more difficult to sing. Make sure you leave time for people to add their own verses to the song. This is best done in twos or threes. The verse should have three lines with eight beats in the first and second lines. The third line will have six beats of which the last three are 'your glo-ry'. You now need to sing the song with all the extra verses as part of your worship.

## **Thank You for Healing Me—Matt Redman**

This song looks at our salvation as healing. How do you think that the tune fits with the words? Is the tune surprising or what you would expect. Get people in pairs to underline all the words which relate to physical healing. How do they help understand our spiritual need for salvation? Redman offers the following Bible reference: Matthew 3:15, Mark 2:17, Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:2. In twos or threes read them through and see how they have influenced his song. Try and get your group to imagine writing a short hospital drama rather than a song about our salvation. Where would it take place: GP surgery, A&E, operating theatre, terminal ward etc. Who would be the characters? What would be the story line? What could go wrong and how might it turn out? Try to help people take about the 'why of their choices'. If time allows, consider how you could use health imagery to talk about mission. (Mk 2:17) In your worship get back to Isaiah 53.

### **The Dance of our God—Geraldine Latty sung by Phatfish.**

One reviewer called this song irritating. Another said that it showed that Latty had been strongly impacted by the doctrine of the Trinity. How do you feel about the song?

In three groups taking one person of the trinity each make a list of the things that you particularly think of as applying to that one. Compare your lists, separate out all the things which apply to all or more than one of them and try and make a list of agreed unique features for each one.

Why do you think Latty talks about a dance? What sort of dance would you think of God doing? Is dance a helpful picture of God's activity? What other pictures are helpful?

Compare the song with *I believe in God the Father*. They are both about the trinity. What does each add to us. You should be able to sing both as part of your worship.

### **How Can I keep from Singing?—REDMAN/TOMLIN—SUNG BY CHRIS TOMLIN**

The writers says that this song was inspired by an earlier song with the same title written in 1860. After you have listened to Tomlin, listen to the Enya version of the older song with the original words available. Pete Seeger and Bruce Springsteen have also recorded it. (There is a music video of the Enya song. To view it you will need to borrow an ipod from Dave or Carole or download it from iTunes for £1.89.)

Start in pairs by listing the good points about each song. In particular be as specific about the words.

Both songs have the same punch line. Have people who can identify with that feeling explain to the others why they feel that way. Allow others to ask them questions if they are willing to be quizzed.

Many songs, from Blessed be the Name onwards are focusing on the need to praise God in the darker times. Why do you think this topic is emerging in songs at the present time. Get people to flick through the book of Psalms and read out bits from those which talk about praising God in the dark times. If this will not work read Acts 16:22-28 and get people to think about the questions the prisoners might have wanted to ask Paul and Silas.

Ask people to write sentences which say. 'Lord, this week I want to sing when...' and, 'Throughout my life I want to sing when ...'. Let people share if they wish but do pray for one another about the release of and endless song in each of our hearts.