

Sing!



Small Group Week 1

Previous Week's Reading: Prelude

Icebreaker: If you could only listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Introduction: Music is a unique and powerful gift from God. It has a special way of lodging itself in the heart and soul, which is why most people can tell you their favorite artist or album, and can be transported to a particular time and place immediately upon hearing a song.

Music in the church can be a very contentious topic. Because people feel so strongly about it, the lyrics and the style and the instrumentation can divide churches. In our study of Sing!, we hope to learn what's most important in congregational singing, and to learn how we can glorify God and grow to be more like Christ through our singing.

Question 1: What comes to your mind when you think about singing in church? Where is that thinking rooted?

Question 2: How would you evaluate the current state of singing in your church?

Question 3: Do you think the focus of singing in your church is more about the people on the stage, or the people in the pews?

Question 4: What is your desire for the singing in your church?

Question 5: What do you hope to learn from this book study?

There are five goals for this study:

- To discover why we sing and the overwhelming joy and holy privilege that comes with singing
- To consider how singing impacts our hearts and minds and all of our lives
- To cultivate a culture of family singing in our daily home life
- To equip our churches for wholeheartedly singing to the Lord and one another as an expression of unity
- To inspire us to see congregational singing as a radical witness to the world

Question 6: Which of these goals are you most excited about?

Close in prayer: Thank God for your group members and ask him to prepare your hearts for this week's reading. Pray that he would be honored by your study of this book and that your group would have the humility to obey him in what they learn.

Assign next week's reading: Chapters 1–2

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Small Group Week 2

Previous Week's Reading: Chapters 1–2

Icebreaker: If you could play any instrument in the world, what would you play?

Introduction: The Bible includes more than four hundred references to singing, and more than fifty direct commands to praise God by singing to and about him. Obviously, the writers of Scripture saw singing to God as an important part of our Christian life!

Commands can be challenging or frustrating, but it relieves the pressure to know that we were created to sing. We are all singers. Regardless of our ability to carry a note, God made us to sing along with all of creation, and he cares far more about the posture of our heart in singing than about our talent.

Question 1: Can you recall your earliest memory of singing? How did it make you feel?

Question 2: What do you experience during congregational singing—joy, fear, self-consciousness, freedom?

Question 3: What kind of “practice” might your church do to help members feel more confident, less self-aware, and more engaged in hymn singing?

Question 4: What response do you have personally to the “command” to sing praise to God?

Question 5: How do you feel about singing not only songs you like, but songs you need to sing?

Question 6: What are some things that might help cultivate singing with intentional thankfulness?

Close in prayer: Thank God for your group members and ask him to prepare your hearts for this week's reading. Pray that he would be honored by your study of this book and that your group would have the humility to obey him in what they learn.

Assign next week's reading: Chapters 3–4

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Small Group Week 3

Previous Week's Reading: Chapters 3–4

Icebreaker: If you could share a meal with one musician, who would that musician be?

Introduction: *C. S. Lewis said, "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation." This certainly rings true in our every day lives—we praise the people, the sports teams, the artists, the politicians, and the possessions that we love!*

We also, then, ought to praise the most praiseworthy person in the world: Jesus Christ. His gospel, the good news that he has saved us, compels us to sing.

Question 1: If worship is a response to revelation, what devotional practices in your own life might help you connect congregational singing as a response to freedom in Christ?

Question 2: What psalm or other Scripture passage resonates with you as your "song of salvation"? Why?

Question 3: What would you consider to be your personal "testimony" song (as "I'm Clean" was for gospel singer Calvin Hunt)?

Question 4: How do you incorporate the hymns of the church (past and present) in your personal life in Christ?

Question 5: Is there a hymn, or hymns, from your past that acts as a milestone marker for your walk with Christ? Why is it still significant and how does it speak to your heart today?

Question 6: What modern song (new to you in the past few years) has connected with you in such a way that you believe it may become a milestone hymn for you in the future?

Close in prayer: Thank God for your group members and ask him to prepare your hearts for this week's reading. Pray that he would be honored by your study of this book and that your group would have the humility to obey him in what they learn.

Assign next week's reading: Chapters 5–6

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Small Group Week 4

Previous Week's Reading: Chapters 5–6

Icebreaker: What is your favorite hymn or worship song?

Introduction: The Christian life is both individual and corporate. God calls us alone, and we will stand before him on judgment day alone (in Christ), but every step of the way in between is corporate—we live our lives with fellow believers.

Singing, as an integral part of the Christian life, is similar. We should sing individually, but perhaps more important, we should sing corporately—with our families and with our local church.

Question 1: If you are a parent or grandparent, how do you feel singing to and with your children or grandchildren? Can you think of ways to make it easy, fun, and a natural part of family life?

Question 2: How could your church help your family incorporate singing into the daily fabric of life?

Question 3: Are there ways you could share your family's success with singing with other families in your community?

Question 4: What are ways you might respond when your church sings a song in a style you don't particularly enjoy or find engaging?

Question 5: Is your church responding proactively to the rather dramatic rate of millennials leaving the church? Is your music a part of this response?

Question 6: What are the ways your church encourages the music as a communal experience in your church? Are there ways you can support, encourage, and model singing in church as a God-focused communal action?

Close in prayer: Thank God for your group members and ask him to prepare your hearts for this week's reading. Pray that he would be honored by your study of this book and that your group would have the humility to obey him in what they learn.

Assign next week's reading: Chapter 7

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Small Group Week 5

Previous Week's Reading: Chapter 7

Icebreaker: Has there ever been a time when you got “caught” singing? (i.e. when you thought you were home alone, when someone caught you in your car, etc.)

Introduction: *There are several ways to witness in the Christian life: we witness to unbelievers by sharing the gospel with them in conversations; we witness to the character of God by living Christlike lives; we witness to the coming kingdom by our corporate lives in the local church.*

We also can, and should, witness by the way we sing. Whether we know it or not, our corporate singing witnesses to something. Ideally, the words we sing will witness to the gospel, and the enthusiasm, joy, and passion with which we sing will witness to the power of Jesus Christ.

Question 1: If there were a visitor to your church who knew nothing about the gospel, what would your church music (selections, presentation, and congregational engagement) convey to him or her about your faith and love for God and each other?

Question 2: What is the difference in a powerful witness and a damaging witness when it comes to our singing?

Question 3: What does your church's music convey to the youth and children in your midst?

Question 4: Why do you think there is such a temptation for churches to get away from congregational singing, and to get away from singing the gospel?

Question 5: What needs to change, in your opinion, about your church's singing in order to help make it a more powerful witness?

Question 6: What can you personally do to help your church's music be consistent with the message of the gospel?

Close in prayer: Thank God for your group members and ask him to prepare your hearts for this week's reading. Pray that he would be honored by your study of this book and that your group would have the humility to obey him in what they learn.

Assign next week's reading: Postlude

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Small Group Week 6

Previous Week's Reading: Postlude

Icebreaker: What's the best concert you've ever attended?

Introduction: We have learned a great deal about singing in this book study! We've talked about the reality that we are created, commanded, and compelled to sing. We've talked about the importance of singing with heart and mind. And we've learned how necessary it is to sing corporately—with family and church.

But none of what we've learned will make a difference unless we do it! We must, each of us, commit to sing. So, after all you've learned in this book study, will you sing?

Question 1: How has your understanding of the role of music in Christian worship changed after reading (and discussing) this book?

Question 2: Would you be willing to share an insight about congregational singing that you have learned from this study?

Question 3: Why is it so important to sing truth?

Question 4: How can we be sure to sing truth *like it is true*?

Question 5: What changes will you make personally to be more engaged in singing the faith?

Question 6: What changes might you suggest for your church to be more engaged as a God-focused, gospel-centered singing community of faith?

Close in prayer: Thank God for your group members, and for his faithfulness to you through this study. Pray that your group would make a lifelong commitment to singing truth, and singing it like it is true, for the glory of Jesus.