



Feast on the Bible's big meal –  
to draw strength for today and tomorrow

## YOUTH ACTIVITY: WAXING LYRICAL – BIBLE READING

### Psalm 10 (Good News Bible)

- 1** Why are you so far away, O LORD?  
Why do you hide yourself when we are in trouble?
- 2** The wicked are proud and persecute the poor;  
catch them in the traps they have made.
- 3** The wicked are proud of their evil desires;  
the greedy curse and reject the LORD.
- 4** The wicked do not care about the LORD;  
in their pride they think that God doesn't matter.
- 5** The wicked succeed in everything.  
They cannot understand God's judgements;  
they sneer at their enemies.
- 6** They say to themselves, "I will never fail;  
I will never be in trouble."
- 7** Their speech is filled with curses, lies, and threats;  
they are quick to speak hateful, evil words.
- 8** They hide themselves in the villages,  
waiting to murder innocent people.  
They spy on their helpless victims;
- 9** they wait in their hiding places like lions.  
They lie in wait for the poor;  
they catch them in their traps and drag them away.
- 10** The helpless victims lie crushed;  
brute strength has defeated them.
- 11** The wicked say to themselves, "God doesn't care!  
He has closed his eyes and will never see me!"
- 12** O LORD, punish those wicked people!  
Remember those who are suffering!
- 13** How can the wicked despise God  
and say to themselves, "He will not punish me"?

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**14** But you do see; you take notice of trouble and suffering and are always ready to help.  
The helpless commit themselves to you;  
you have always helped the needy.

**15** Break the power of wicked and evil people;  
punish them for the wrong they have done  
until they do it no more.

**16** The LORD is king for ever and ever.  
Those who worship other gods  
will vanish from his land.

**17** You will listen, O LORD, to the prayers of the lowly;  
you will give them courage.

**18** You will hear the cries of the oppressed and the orphans;  
you will judge in their favour,  
so that mortal men may cause terror no more.

## YOUTH ACTIVITY: WAXING LYRICAL

### Aims:

- To help the young people realise that life's troubles take on a new perspective when looked at in the light of the fuller picture given by Scripture – of what God is like, what he thinks of us and what he is doing.

### Set up:

- If doing the opening activity, you will need to have the lyrics to one or two recent pop songs that the young people are likely to know. (Suggestions: 'Umbrella' by Rihanna; 'Ruby' by The Kaiser Chiefs; 'I Wanna Have Your Babies' by Natasha Bedingfield). These are easily found on sites such as:

<http://www.lyrics.com/>

<http://www.elyrics.net/>

<http://www.songlyrics.com/>

Make sure you have enough copies so that each young person can at least have sight of a sheet.

Select **one single line** from each song and make enough copies so that each young person can have a slip of paper with the lyric on.

Obtain a copy of 'Praise you in this storm' by Casting Crowns (From the Album, *Lifesong*) and 'Going Under' by Evanescence (From the Album, *Fallen*). Both are downloadable from: <http://www.apple.com/uk/itunes/store/music.html> (If you want to play the songs in the opening activity these will also be available here).

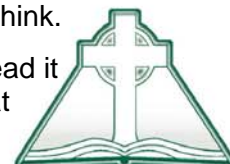
- Photocopy enough copies of Psalm 10 for everyone.  
Have scrap paper and pens handy.

### Opening activity:

- Split the young people into small groups. Explain that you're going to give them a lyric from a song which has been in the charts in the last year. Their task is to tell you what they think it's about from that one lyric. They'll have a minute to write down what they think.
- Give each group the lyric slip for the first song (or you may want to simply read it out), along with a pen and some paper. Give them a minute to work out what they think the song is about. (If you have a particularly gifted set of young people you may want to encourage

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them to try writing the rest of the song – assuming they don't know what the song is – before you ask them to feed back their thoughts.) If anyone guesses the song, ask them to blank out the other parts of the song they know, and concentrate on what they'd be able to work out about the song from that one single lyric.

- Distribute or read out the full song lyrics. (If you wish you can play the song while you do this. Again, i-tunes should have most songs for downloading if you don't have the CD). Give the group a few moments to think about this or read the song through. Then ask:
  - What's the song about?
  - How is it different from what you *thought* it was about?
  - How does the way you look at the single lyric change when you look at it in the whole song? What difference does that single lyric make to the song? (How would it affect the song if it wasn't there?)
- If you want, you can repeat the exercise with the other lyrics (but don't feel you have to use them all).
- Ask if the lyrics made complete sense when the group looked at just one line without the rest of the song. (The answer should be 'no'!) Ask if there are any moments in life like that where you think 'That doesn't make sense. How can that be allowed to happen?'

## Application:

- Many people look at life's struggles and tragedies and decide that it just doesn't make sense or it makes them question where God is. You could use examples such as the 2004 Tsunami in Asia, terrorist attacks or things closer to home (illness, unemployment, etc). Note: Be aware of the sensitivities of the group (e.g. don't mention cancer if a relative of someone in the group is suffering from the disease).
- Explain that they're going to listen to two songs which deal with issues of suffering and pain. Play 'Going Under' by Evanescence and afterwards ask the group to sum up the mood of the song (generally a sense of not being able to cope, desperation, drowning).
- Explain that you're going to play another song now, also dealing with pain but ask if they can see a difference in tone. Listen to the lyrics of 'Praise you in this storm' by Casting Crowns.
- Ask:

Is the singer of this song any less in pain than the one before? (Not necessarily)

Is there any difference in attitude from the song before? If so, what? (The singer is able to look beyond his pain to see God and is aware that God is seeing him through).

We said before that people sometimes feel that pain doesn't seem to make sense. Does knowing God make any more sense of the pain? Does feeling pain help us understand any more about God? (This is a difficult one. On one level, no. We still don't fully understand why there has to be pain in the world. However, in moments of pain we are often able to see God more clearly because we realise that we can't carry on without him. We realise that God is bigger than the troubles we are going through. We also need to remember that Jesus knows what it's like to go through pain and that he died so that one day there will be no more pain.)

Read out Revelation 21.1–4.

- Explain that, whatever we go through in life, we need to be able to step back and try to see the bigger picture of how God is still there for us, still committed to us, even at times when we can't *see or feel it*.



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## Additional:

- Explain that the more we read the Bible, the more we realise that there's nothing we go through which people haven't gone through before. Sunday Schools often pick the 'nice' stories but the Bible is not a 'nice' book. In it we read of wars, murder, betrayal, adultery, slavery and worse. Yet, in all these things, we see people continuing to look to God.
- The book of Psalms in the Bible is full of people struggling with real problems, yet looking to God for help. Explain that they will look at one now.
- Split the young people into small groups. Hand out copies of Psalm 10 so that everyone has a copy. Depending on the confidence of the young people, either ask them to read round the Psalm in their groups or get a few more confident people to read it out on behalf of everyone else.

- Ask:

What real life problem is the writer struggling with? (People who exploit the weak and kill innocent people.)

Is this still a problem today? Can you give any examples?

What other worries do you think the writer has, particularly in relation to God? (Why isn't God doing anything? Does He care?)

How does the writer's mood change? What is it that makes that change? (Becomes more hopeful as he remembers God.)

Why doesn't the writer give up hope? (He remembers that God is King forever but evil people will one day vanish. Also, God defends and comforts those who are attacked).

## Optional:

- Hand out some paper and a pen to each group. Explain that psalms are really just songs. In their small groups, encourage the young people to write their own psalms as modern day songs/raps. Suggest that, as with the psalms, they write about issues they struggle with and then how those issues look when they realise that God cares about them. Some may be happier doing this on their own rather than in a group (though others may struggle on their own). If you have any gifted musicians/rappers in the group, they may want to perform it!

## Conclusion:

- The more we get to know the Bible and its big picture of what God is like, of his love for this world and of what he is doing to rescue it, the more we can start to see God even in 'the storms' – the hard situations. This gives us confidence that God can work in our lives too, however hopeless things may look. We need the Bible to help us focus on the larger picture and not get stuck just looking at our immediate circumstances.
- End in prayer, asking God to help the group be more aware of him, particularly in the middle of painful times.

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