

I Dare You

Module: Don't Forget the Lyrics

Lesson 1: I know this one...

Objectives:

Students will

- examine and evaluate lyrics from their favourite songs
- make connections between current songs and the Psalms

Materials Needed

- ☐ White/black board or paper and things to write with.
- ☐ Paper and pens for groups of 3-4 students.
- ☐ **Before** the time you are going to use this lesson, have students to select one of their favourite songs and bring a copy of the lyrics with them. This could also be a great chance for your leadership team to connect with students as well, so encourage them to participate by bringing in lyrics also. (You may also want to collect a few different song selections in case students forget to bring their own.)

Minds On

The introduction of this module requires that students bring in lyrics from one of their favourite songs. To start this session, encourage students to get into groups of 3 or 4 to compare songs. If multiple students have selected the same song, ask them to group with people who have a different one.

The purpose of this exercise is to discuss the lyrical content of the song. This may be new for some students who just focus on the music or the beat, but challenge them to think about the words and what they mean. What was the song writer trying to say? Is there a deeper message? What words or feelings does this song evoke lyrically? How is the writer trying to express him or herself? What might have been the situation behind the creation of this song? (You may want to put these questions on chart paper as you introduce the activity, in order to keep students focussed.)

After working through those questions, have each group select one song that they feel is the strongest lyrically, and be prepared to give a brief explanation.

(**LEADERS NOTE:** Allowing students to bring in lyrics to popular songs may include some with profane language or other inappropriate content. You will need to decide for your group if you want to set parameters on song choice. I would strongly encourage you NOT to set the boundary at Christian music. This could be a great chance for you to get to know your students better, and develop a deeper understanding of their worldview. Enforcing this kind of limitation could put students into a box that they might not fit.

If you are uncomfortable with this, perhaps you could select a few students who you trust and know well, and have them bring in lyrics from popular songs, both Christian and secular, that would be “appropriate.” Those songs can then be discussed in the group settings.)

Action

With the larger group back together, have each small group share the song that they have chosen and offer their explanation for why it was selected.

Once each group has presented, point out that they have already made choices about how and why songs are good, or not good, from a lyrical standpoint. As a group, begin to figure out the criteria that were used by the students in the **Minds On** activity. Use the black/white board or poster paper to record their ideas.

Some answers might be that the writer had a unique or original perspective on a given situation, or that there was a level of authenticity or honesty in what was being said, or it might just be that the lyrics sound good or are catchy. Encourage them to also consider the emotional effect that a particular song has. Is the overall “feeling” positive or negative? Avoid conversations that have students holding up their favourite bands over other groups. The point is to discuss lyrics, not which band or singer is better. (That being said, if some of the critique is centred on the lifestyle or image of the band, this can be helpful. If a band is perceived as being phony or having “sold out,” this can sag way nicely into the idea of authenticity.)

The point of this discussion is to develop a framework that can be used in the weeks to come as students evaluate and interact with the Psalms of David. By holding current songs and the Psalms to the same criteria, students will hopefully begin to see a connection between the songs that they choose to listen to during their various moods and emotional experience and the words that are contained in the Bible’s Psalms, which were originally set to music.

OPTIONAL: As a further example, and to set the tone for what is to come in the following lessons, lead the students through a BRIEF discussion of Psalm 23 using the list that was generated by the students. Allow them to express their honest thoughts and opinions. It is okay if they don’t resonate with the imagery that David used, or if they have issues with some portion of the Psalm.

You might want to project the Psalm on the wall or have it written up on poster board so you can make marks beside points of interest.

If discussion is slow, use the same questions from the **Minds On** portion to stimulate conversation. Questions like what does the imagery mean? What was the song writer trying to say? Is there a deeper message? What words or feelings does this Psalm evoke? How is the writer trying to express himself? What do you think was the situation behind the creation of this song?

Consolidate/Debrief

Say something like: As we have seen tonight, the words of the songs that we listen to are powerful. They can alter our moods. They can express thoughts and feelings that we haven't been able to deal with or express on our own, and they can offer a new way to view the world around us. Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at a number of songs that are actually written down in the Bible, in the book of Psalms, and we are going to use the list that we have just made to evaluate and understand them better.

Give a brief introduction to the Psalms, indicating that they are essentially a collection of songs written by a few different people, but mainly a man named David. Let the students know that they contain a wide range of emotions, both positive and negative.