

The Sound of Music LIVE!

A Discussion Guide for Small Groups

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TOPICS: FREEDOM, LEGALISM, DECISION-MAKING, MUSIC

Maria, the bubbly novice nun frolicking through the Austrian hills, has a problem—she just can't stop singing. The abbess at her convent doesn't know what to make of her. Neither does Captain von Trapp, the stoic military man who brings Maria into his home as a governess to care for his mischievous and unruly children. Alongside his beau Elsa and exuberant friend Max, the Captain and his family struggle to navigate the troubling influence of the Third Reich as the Nazi threat draws near. Even with approaching Nazis, Maria just keeps singing. She addresses the problems in life with a twinkle in her eye and a song in her step.

Each of these characters—the abbess, Captain von Trapp, Max, and Maria—have a particular outlook on life. The abbess and nuns are always focused on the problems around them, worrying about worldly passions and seeking to stay sheltered in their holy convent. The Captain addresses the world through disciplined structure; there is no time for passions or pleasures in this life, not when there's work to be done and discipline to be maintained. Max lives his life according to the whims of the world around him, blown about by whatever is most popular or powerful in any given season. His aim is to please, even if it means moral compromise. Surrounded by worry, discipline, and people-pleasing, Maria stands out as a free-spirited woman living with a contagious joy that can not be contained. Her songs of freedom transform the people around her, particularly the Captain and his solemn demeanor.

When it comes to our relationship with God, the Bible puts it this way: “*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom*” (2 Corinthians 3:17, NIV). The God of the Bible is a God of freedom, a God who rescues people from the slavery of a mundane, oppressive, legalistic, drab life and invites us into the abundant life of Jesus. Yet for many of us, we don't feel this freedom the apostle Paul describes. When I look at Maria and her infectious smile, her joyful songs, and her childlike wonder at the world around her, I find myself...well...annoyed. Why can't I feel that way, too? We all long for the kind of freedom that Maria seems to experience all the time.

Paul also writes in Galatians, “*Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.*” (Galatians 5:1, The Message).

ACTIVITY

While watching “*The Sound of Music*,” for every scene where Maria begins to sing a song, have everyone in the group stand up and frolic around the room/house/building with arms outstretched and a big smile on everyone’s face.

God never intended for His children to turn a relationship with Him into a rote religious practice or a lifeless drudgery, like the Captain. He also never meant for us to use our freedom in Christ to conjoin ourselves to the life-destroying practices and values of the world around us, like Max. He calls us to realize that we can’t experience the joy—the music—of His abundant life without His help. So, like Maria, we must turn to the hills for our help and salvation, alive with the rhythms of His grace.

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth*
Psalm 121:1-2, NIV

SCRIPTURE TO READ

Psalm 121
Galatians 5:1
2 Corinthians 3:17
Psalm 96

SCENES TO DISCUSS

SCENE #1

Maria is talking with the Mother Abbess when she makes this statement:

Maria: I can’t seem to stop singing wherever I am. And what’s worse, I can’t seem to stop saying things - anything and everything I think and feel.
Mother Abbess: Some people would call that “honesty.”
Maria: Oh, but it’s terrible, Reverend Mother.

Questions: Why do you think “honesty” is such a terrible thing for Maria? How could honesty with others get us into conflicts? How could honesty help build up relationships?

SCENE #2

Max and Captain von Trapp are discussing the situation with the rise of the Nazis, and von Trapp is growing increasingly frustrated with Max’s stance:

Max: What’s going to happen’s going to happen. Just make sure it doesn’t happen to you.
*Captain von Trapp: Max. Don’t you *ever* say that again.*

Max: You know I have no political convictions. Can I help it if other people do?

Captain von Trapp: Oh yes, you can help it. You must help it.

Questions: Why do you think people give into outside and peer pressures? Like, what makes us so easily influenced as people? Why do you think the Captain can stand his ground against the Nazi influence, but Max can't?

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is your favorite song from “The Sound of Music?” Why?
- What kind of music do you typically listen to, and why? How does God use music and poetry to transform us and bring joy back into our lives?
- Think of the worldview and way of life for each of these characters: the abbess, Captain von Trapp, Max, and Maria. Which character do you resonate with the most? Why?
- Why does the joy and freedom of Maria seem so “out there” or hard to grasp for our selves? What are the obstacles in your life that prevent you from experiencing joy and freedom?
- Psalm 96 encourages us to “sing to the Lord a new song.” When you encounter hardships or pain, what is your initial reaction? How might singing to the Lord give us perspective in the midst of pain?



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