

WONDERFUL YOUTH



Five Biblical sessions created for Black History Month to empower young people between the ages of 13 and 16 to become 'The best that you can be'

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Recommendation to youth leaders:

Some of these sessions include links to videos on YouTube. We have no control over the adverts which may be displayed on YouTube before the videos are shown, and are aware that some content may not be appropriate for the young people in your group. We therefore suggest you access the videos before the start of your session and pause them after the adverts so that you ready to share the video content only with your group.

WHAT DOES CLIMATE JUSTICE MEAN TO YOU?

Commissioned by the Baptist Union Racial Justice Group this edition of *WONDERFUL YOUTH* has been written by contributors from Six Ways Baptist Church, Birmingham, John Bunyan Baptist Church, Oxford and Christian Aid. *WONDERFUL YOUTH* intentionally centres on Black and Brown young people and provides opportunities for Baptist churches to do the same. This fourth edition considers the impact of climate change on Black and Brown communities. With the support of Christian Aid it also recommends how climate injustice can be mitigated. We trust that this new resource will inspire and challenge the young people in your church.

The *WONDERFUL YOUTH* team

Christian Aid Collective:

We are a community of 18-30 year-old Christians who care about dignity, equality, justice and love.

Powered by Christian Aid, we campaign to change the world.

We use our prophetic voice to speak truth to power as a key tool to help the fight against global poverty and witness real climate justice.

Follow us on Instagram for live updates: @thecacollective
Check out our website for more information: caid.org.uk/collective



Baptists Together:

Racial justice issues have been recognised as a key concern for our Union for many years, with the Racial Justice Working Group being set up at the March 1995 Council in response to the growing diversity of our country and churches.

WONDERFUL YOUTH is one example of the Baptist Union's intention to become anti-racist, the importance of which was highlighted by the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

Check out our website for more information: baptist.org.uk/racialjustice

This is the fourth edition of the resource - earlier editions can be found at www.baptist.org.uk/wonderfultyouth

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ISABEL AND GERARD GOSHAWK

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All of God's creation has worth

God valued creation before and after he made us. Creation is an expression of God's goodness and witness to Him, and not only for human use. The whole of creation praises and glorifies God our Creator.



'We shouldn't exclude prosperity but it's important to remember that looking after the earth is part of our holistic prosperity.'

Rev Delroy Henry, New Testament Church of God



ALL OF GOD'S CREATION HAS WORTH

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- » To help young people appreciate that God valued creation before and after he made human beings and that creation is an expression of God's goodness.
- » To gain a greater appreciation of how God views creation.
- » To help young people to value all of God's creation.

SESSION OUTCOME

For each young person to appreciate how amazing God's creation is and to see how it reflects God's goodness.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Pens and paper
- » Bibles (NLT version)
- » Paper, paint, crayons and felt tips
- » Computer with internet access to show images

PRAYER

God of creation.

We close our eyes in prayer now but pray that you would open our eyes to the beauty and the wonder of the world that you have made.

We praise you that it is all so clever.

We praise you that it all works together.

We praise you that your creation looks good!

Open our eyes to your brilliant creation!

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

True/false quiz on amazing creation facts

- 1 The smallest mammal in the world is the Bumblebee Bat which is 2.5 cm long and weighs 2 grammes. (True)
- 2 The tallest tree in the world is 115.92 metres tall and is a Giant Greenwood in California, USA. (False - it's a Giant Redwood)
- 3 The Great Barrier Reef can be seen from up in space. (True)
- 4 The sunset on Mars looks green. (False - it looks blue)
- 5 Sharks do not have bones (True)

Feel free to add your own to the above!

OPEN THE WORD

Read: Genesis 1: 4-25 (NLT)

Questions:

- » What does God use to create everything?
- » For how many days is God at work?
- » Which day is the busiest?
- » How many times does it say 'it was good'?

In these verses we learn how God created all the different parts of our world in a particular and very practical order. We don't get a huge amount of detail as to how God did it or what exactly was created but the overall premise is that it happened and it was good!

Read: Romans 1: 20 (NLT)

The apostle Paul is writing to the believers in the church at Rome and he wants to make it very clear that, as he puts it, there is no excuse for not knowing God. Why? Because when we look at the earth and the sky and everything that God has made, we can see God's awesome power and his incredible love in action.

Questions:

- » What parts of God's creation demonstrate God's power?
- » When we think of God's power, how does it make us feel?
- » What in God's creation shows God's love and incredible attention to detail?
- » Jesus said that God doesn't forget a single sparrow and that we are more important than a whole flock... how does that make us feel?



ACTIVITY

Compare and contrast

Look together at some images of different contexts and discuss which ones are most appealing and most attractive, eg Lake District... Sahara... Nigeria Delta... Negril... El Salvador... Caspian Sea... India... cityscapes... Birmingham... New York... Mumbai

Beauty in creation where we are

Take the young people to somewhere just outside the church building and see how many signs of beauty you can find... a grass verge by a road... a patch of sky behind a building... graffiti on a fence... sunshine on a car roof...

Introduce the idea of 'beauty in the eye of the beholder'.

Art work

Create a piece of artwork: individually or as a group. Maybe it could be of something in nature or in the local environment. How can you declare that it is good?

Or challenge the young people to take photos on their phones in the week ahead of God's created beauty in the local community and create a montage of these when next you meet (a paper one or on the church website etc).

CLOSE AND FINAL PRAYER

A Prayer of thanks and confession

God in creation,
you are the origin of all things.
We pray that today we might look at all things
around us and see with you that it is good.
And help us to see something of you, in
everything and everyone.
Help us to see you
in the view from our window
in the weeds on the roadside
in the park and the playing fields
in sunlit sky in the street-lit sky
in pigeons and parakeets
in all things.
Help us to see you and see with you, that it is
good.
Amen.



Rose is widowed and lives with her six grandchildren in a village affected by severe drought. When she was younger the rain was more reliable and she didn't skip meals. But not anymore. She prays that rains will become more normal like they used to be. Photo credit: Christian Aid/ Adam Finch

We are part of a community of life

God placed humans in a community of interconnected relationships. Creation is life-centred and all living beings are sustained by God.



'In Nigerian Igbo language, God is called Chineke meaning "God of creation; God the creator." There is an inclination that the earth belongs to the Lord and we must be good stewards of our creator's land as also stated in Psalm 24.'

Rev Marcus Chilaka, RCCG Living Water Parish

WE ARE PART OF A COMMUNITY OF LIFE

'A friend is there to help, in any situation, and relatives are born to share our troubles.'

Proverbs 17:17 (CEV)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- » To connect with the stories of those in communities different from ours.
- » To understand their struggles and start exploring the word of God to find the answers of how God would respond, and how we ought to respond as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- » To connect with the stories of those from a different background.
- » To find God in their stories
- » To build a response using the word and will of God.

SESSION OUTCOME

To engage the young people in reflecting and responding to their brothers and sisters who are experiencing times of adversity.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Printed copies of the two letters (page 12)
- » Two pieces of paper
- » Pens and pencils
- » NKJV version of the Bible
- » Colouring stationery

PRAYER

Father God we come before you, ready to hear your voice and to respond to the mandate you have placed upon us and entrusted us with - to look after the poor and the sick.

We come before you as your children, ready to hear from a father who gives good gifts.

Speak to us now. Bring new revelations.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

INTRODUCTION

Icebreaker questions:

How long can a person go without water:

- a 6-10 days
- b 14-18 days
- c 3-5 days?

Correct answer 3- 5 days.

Share Interesting Fact:

On a global scale, half of the people who drink water from unsafe sources live in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 24% of the population have access to safe drinking water, and 28% have basic sanitation facilities that are not shared with other households.

Take time to reflect on this fact as you read the following scripture.

OPEN THE WORD

Read: Matthew 25:31-46 NKJV

Discussion questions (5 minutes)

- » What is standing out to you in this scripture?
- » What is revealed about Jesus' expectation for us?
- » Would you say we are shown Jesus' priority in our purpose and why?
- » What outcomes can we take away from this?

PRAYER

Prayer of thanksgiving:

Heavenly Father
our provider and protector.

Thank you for providing for our families and our communities.

Thank you for ensuring that we are clothed, that we have clean water to drink and that we are able to access regular running water.

Prayer of confession:

Dear Lord Jesus,

We come to you to ask for your forgiveness.
Forgive us for the times we have taken for granted the blessings you have given us.

For the times we have not used what we have to help others.

Thank you Jesus, Amen.

Prayer for others:

Father, we pray for those people who are living in poverty, those who lack water.

We pray for strength and for your provision to be made known in their lives.

We invite Kingdom resources over their lives.
Amen

ACTIVITY

Writing letters (5-10 minutes)

Read the letters from Tino and Esther (page 12)

Discussion Questions

- » What stood out to you from these letters?
- » How does God view them and their challenges?
- » What can the church do to help and support them, given they live in another country?

Activity Part 1

Pick between Tino and Esther to write a letter to them, a poem, a song or art drawing. Things to include:

- » A bit about you
- » A bible verse to encourage them with their current challenges
- » A prayer

Activity Part 2

Split the young people into two groups - one that will respond to Tino's letter and one for Esther. Come up with an idea of what you would do as a community/church to support them with their current challenges.

Examples:

- » Bake sales etc
- » Send them a picture with encouraging words
- » Donate clothes
- » Commit to praying for them regularly.

Words in action

What actions can you start taking this week to support and help someone who lives under challenging circumstances like Tino and Esther? Where can you find their stories?

- » Write down three different things you can start doing this week.



CLOSE AND FINAL PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,

Thank you for every word that you have brought to us today.

Thank you for the time of reflection and the ability to learn from the stories of others.

Help us to be more alert and more in tune with how we can continue speaking on behalf of those who have no one speaking up for them.

Highlight to us who we can help and how.

Fill us with boldness and the ability to serve others.

WRITING LETTERS ACTIVITY

Letter from Tino - Harare, Zimbabwe

To the person reading this...

My name is Tinotenda, I am a girl and live in Zimbabwe. I am eighteen years old and I recently finished my A Level and I was doing commercial subjects namely Business Enterprise Skills, accounting and Computer Science. I am the first born in my family and I have a little brother.

I aspire to major in IT or maybe accounting one day in University. Zimbabwe is an economically challenged country and some of us are not as fortunate as the rest of you guys abroad are. We hear you have benefits such as regular running water, better economy, you have electricity and wifi all the time and even go to school for free. Well, to us all this is considered as a myth. I have been in boarding school and as hard as it is to believe, my parents' combined pay cannot even cover for half of the fees. Not to mention my brother's also. Fees, bills, fuel, airtime/data that have to be paid using the same pay cheque.

I would love to help my family sustain a better living but finding a job in Zimbabwe is nearly impossible, even for people with high class degrees and certificates. So imagine how difficult it will be for a person who just finished high school. Poor families over here will watch a family member die with no medication or at least help from the hospitals because of the lack of financial resources.

It's a shame we live daily with these challenges, but with the Almighty to guide us we somehow manage to live joyfully through it all. My results haven't come out yet and I am kindly asking for your prayers, please pray for me so that whatever happens I will succeed or be able to rise up. I pray that God answers the prayers of whoever reads this.

Thank you!

Letter from Esther - Harare, Zimbabwe

Dear Brother or Sister in Christ

My name is Esther Ndlovu. I am 8 years old. I live in Harare in Zimbabwe. My favorite subject is English. I love God so much because he also loves us and takes care of us. Whenever we pray to him he hears and answers us. He is always with us, he never leaves us alone.

My dream is to become a teacher when I grow up, because I would like to see other children becoming educated and following their dreams.

The challenge that I am facing is that my parents have difficulty to pay my school fees because they are missionary workers. They are not employed they do only missionary work. They are not always able to afford to buy for me the toys and clothes I wish to have and I am so sad about that.

Please pray for God to help me excel at school and to provide my parents with condition to pay my school fees at all times.

Yours in Christ

Esther Ndlovu



Faith Muvili lives near a sand dam built by ADS. She is married with five children. Thanks to the water from the dam, she now has a kitchen garden where she grows fruit and veg to feed her family. She also sells them to pay for her children's school fees. Photo credit: Christian Aid

Our kinship with nature

God gave humans a unique role to care for creation, as stewards who 'look after', 'serve' and 'keep' it, while enjoying creation's provision for human livelihoods. The land itself is not to be worshipped as a deity; it produces the offerings of God.

The first thing God sanctified was time (Gen 2:3). Humans have the responsibility of safeguarding the Sabbath principle not only for themselves, but also for creation itself, to rest and experience renewal.



'Not by my will but the will of the Lord (Mark 14:36) comes to mind. We need to consider preservation and God's earth as part of God's will for his glory'.

The Venerable Rosemarie Mallet Arch Deacon of Croydon for Diocese of Southwark



OUR KINSHIP WITH NATURE

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- » To help the young people know about their relationship with nature and that God has given them the responsibility to look after his creation by connecting and reflecting with nature.
- » To help young people understand their unique role to care for creation as stewards.
- » To explore how stewardship is a form of worship.
- » To understand the importance of sabbath for rest and renewal.

SESSION OUTCOME

For each young person to have pragmatic approaches towards looking after God's creation and learn the importance of trust and rest in him.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Pens and paper
- » Permanent markers
- » Rocks (from outside)
- » Paint, glue, brushes, googly eyes (optional)
- » Projector and screen (if you have a large group)
- » Computer with internet access to show videos

PRAYER

Heavenly father, thank you for the gift of creation.

From the clouds above to the seas below, we praise the works of your hand.

Please help us to understand our roles as stewards to look after, serve and protect the world you created.

May we take moments out in nature to reflect on your goodness and rest in renewal.

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

As children of God we should be motivated by scripture in all that we do to care for each other and the planet. This can be achieved in the lifestyle choices we make everyday - from taking shorter showers, or walking to school or even consuming less meat. If we are to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31), we need to take our role as stewards seriously.

Using a computer and projector watch the following videos (Approx 10 mins)

- » Does the Gospel have anything to do with creation care?

<https://youtu.be/NtTMQnfJovU>

- » Creation Care and Why Environmental Stewardship is a Biblical Principle

<https://youtu.be/tec5WWgA0mk>

Alternatively

Ask the young people what they think it means to look after the earth. Encourage conversation with prompts such as:

- » 'Put your hand up if you recycle'
- » 'Put your hand up if you walk to school'
- » 'Put your hand up if you cycle or take public transport'
- » A thought-provoking question could be 'Do you think there are more leaves or grass in the world?'

As it says in Mark 14:36 'Not by my will but the will of the Lord'. Ask the group what is a loving thing to do to ensure everyone can enjoy nature.

OPEN THE WORD

Read: Genesis 1:29-30 and Genesis 2:15

Understanding the reading

In these two passages God is speaking to Adam and Eve about their role as stewards. God gave them the responsibility to 'work it and keep it'. It is clear to them that looking after all the plants and beasts on the Earth also provided them with the means of food and shelter to flourish.

Short discussion

Ask the young people about how God provides for them through creation.

eg Do they remember the last time they saw a rainbow or a beautiful sunset? Talk about any of the fruits or vegetables that they like to eat or the places they like to visit and spend their free time. Remind them that God created all of those things and experiences.

Read: Genesis 2:3

Understanding the reading

After God created the world he rested on the seventh day. This is also known as the sabbath. Likewise, although we have busy lives we should remember to take breaks and have quiet time with God as a way of worship and self-care.

Short discussion

Ask them 'what does rest mean to you?'

Read: Psalm 18:2

Understanding the reading

In this Psalm David describes God as his rock and his deliverer. God has created us and everything in our world, and we can trust him to provide and deliver us. We can trust him and rest in him. As we take responsibility in looking after creation let us remember that we can only do it with God's strength and we are not alone. Nothing is too hard with God especially amongst eco-anxiety.

ACTIVITY

God is our Rock

Pet Rock (God is known as our rock that cares for us)

- » Each young person should go outside and find a rock that they would like to keep as a pet. They can then give it a name and take time to describe the characteristics of the rock from its size, shape, colour and texture. Get them to decorate it and sketch it on a piece of paper and give the rock unique characteristics
- » Help the young people to understand that, just like this rock, God has given us unique characteristics and he also looks after us - just like the exercise is encouraging them to do.
- » Remind them that God has given them a special job to look after creation.

Cloud exercise (The first thing God sanctified was time Genesis 2:3)

- » Time belongs to God and we have the responsibility to use it well. Sometimes we get distracted by so many things in life, that we forget to stop and rest (Sabbath).
- » Explain that our minds can also be busy and cloud our focus on God. Our thoughts come and go across our minds like clouds in the sky. Some are big, some are wispy and some are even rain clouds.
- » On a piece of paper, ask the young people to write down, think and reflect on what they have learned, and how they are feeling, in the shape of clouds. Take moments of silence to lift them up as prayer requests to God.



CLOSE AND FINAL PRAYER

Words in action

What can you do this week to look after God's creation?

Leaders Notes

Encourage the young people to think of ways to enjoy and notice nature in their daily lives eg their commute to school and identifying different species of trees, observing the shapes of clouds in the sky. Encourage them to recycle and opt for vegetarian options when they can.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you made the heavens and all the stars.

You made the earth and everything that is in it.

You give life to everything and provide for all our needs.

Please help us to appreciate and respect your world everyday in our little actions, so that we can love our neighbours as ourselves.

Amen.



As the children are in school, Rose collects water from miles to cook for them. She prays that the rain will become more normal like they used to be.
Photo credit: Christian Aid/Richard Finch

A 'prophetic voice' beyond stewardship

Christ came to challenge authority with his gospel, to speak against any form of injustice and to protect the vulnerable, poor and the oppressed. God has called us to use our prophetic voice to hold to account the powers' of ecological and social exploitation. A prophetic voice speaks with moral courage to effect change, and assures people and the oppressed that justice will prevail.



'Let's stand together on Psalm 143:10 to speak up for brothers and sisters affected by flooding, drought and pollution.'

Rev Wale Hudson-Roberts Baptists Together Justice Enabler



Supporting scripture -
1Kings 21 | Isaiah 1:16-17 | Isaiah 29:19-20 | Gen 12:1



A 'PROPHETIC VOICE' BEYOND STEWARDSHIP

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- » To help young people understand that Jesus is the ultimate social justice activist.
- » To explore the meaning of prophetic voice.
- » To understand the biblical understanding of justice.
- » For each young person to practise faith in action through art.
- » For each young person to make room for God's voice and spirit to fill them up with moral courage.

SESSION OUTCOME

- » For each young person to know they have the moral courage needed to be a prophetic voice for climate justice.
- » For each young person to have practised prophetic voice through art.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Pens, colouring pencils and A4 paper
- » Stapler
- » Bibles
- » Laptop with internet access
- » Projector and screen

PRAYER

Father, thank you for your good gift found in creation.

Please fill us up with your spirit so that we may be agents of change as we use our prophetic voice to champion climate justice.

Give us courage, wisdom and boldness.

As you raised up righteous leaders like Nehemiah, help us to rebuild our hearts, homes and church as we move stewardship into life-giving action.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

INTRODUCTION

1 Word Association Game

Gather the youth to sit in a large circle. The youth leader should say each word list below at the start of each round. Once a round begins, each person has 2 seconds to say the first word that comes to their mind. If they take too long, they are eliminated from the next round. Each round should gain speed gradually until one person remains.

Creation
Stewardship
Pollution
Flooding
Drought
Climate change
Poverty
Power
Climate justice

Questions for youth leader to ask the group:

- » How did these words make you feel?
- » Do you hear these words often?
- » Who do you think faces the impact of these words eg climate change

2 YouTube Videos

It's Time for Climate Justice (1:18 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0VrtY4KW0w

Ella's story (3:17 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuhXUH2U_EI

Climate Justice: Why Young People Care and What The Church Can Do To Help (2:07 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=q19y5y43NrY

ACTIVITY

1 Young Adult Climate Justice Stories Resource

Use a projector and screen to display the illustrations in this resource from Christian Aid (www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/get-involved/young-adult-climate-justice-stories) and have different youth read each story.

Questions to ask the group:

- » How do these stories make you feel?
- » What words stand out to you?
- » What do these illustrations tell you? Is it how you would have visualised the story? If not, how would you illustrate the story?

2 Prophetic Voice through Art

Now it's time to put what God has placed in the hearts of young people to paper through art. Like the illustrative resource that has just been shared, young people can prophetically express what achieving climate justice looks like through art form.

Play some worship music ([click here for a suggested playlist](#)) and encourage silent reflection on the questions:

- » How can our church work towards climate justice?
- » What is God saying to you? What's on your heart? What do you see in your mind?

Using paper, pens, colouring pencils etc encourage the youth to be as creative as they want to be. They can draw their response to the question (How can our church work towards climate justice?). They can draw, create cartoons, mind maps - whatever they feel creatively, feel free to do.

Once all drawings/pieces of artwork are done, using a stapler, connect all the different pieces of paper and pin to a board so they collectively make a large mural board.

During a Sunday service, invite the youth to speak to the church about their drawings/artwork.

Invite them to share:

- » what God placed on their heart
- » what climate justice means to them.
- » what they are challenging their church to do to achieve climate justice in their local context.

OPEN THE WORD

God created the world

God is the Creator who brought the earth to existence and to function through his perfect ordered design. From the largest mountains to the tiniest pebble, God created it all.

- » Psalm 104: 25-30
- » Psalm 24:1
- » Colossians 1:16-17
- » Nehemiah 9:6

Every living thing is part of God's creation. Plants and animals are all part of the environment God created on the Earth. God deeply cares for each living thing and it is catered for through his perfect design.

- » Isaiah 43:20
- » Job 37:14-18
- » Matthew 6:26
- » John 3:16

God calls us to care for his creation. In the Bible, God calls us to steward his good creation and to also be a prophetic voice, through word and action, for those who are marginalised, persecuted, suffering and victims of injustice. Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesy about the dire consequences that happen when we do not obey God, but allow injustice resulting in people not being able to enjoy God's good creation.

- » Micah 6:8
- » Genesis 1:26
- » Ezekiel 34:2-4
- » Isaiah 24:4-6
- » Jeremiah 2:7



CLOSE AND FINAL PRAYER

Prophetic voice, meaning to speak truth to power can take place in lots of different ways. For Ella's mum it meant campaigning for justice over Ella's death, for the church it could mean reducing waste, investing in renewable energy, planting more trees and so much more! God speaks to us in lots of different ways and can give you the moral courage and wisdom to know how to move your voice into action. Keep praying and discerning how God can use you for climate justice!

Father God, Creator God,
you are holy, Lord of our lives and worthy of all our praise.

We're sorry for the ways in which we have failed to live out your command to steward the Earth and do justice.

Please help us to move our words into action so that no one, like Ella, has to suffer. Give us boldness to encourage our leaders to be more climate friendly.

Help us to be prophetic so that we can follow the ways of the ultimate justice advocate, your son, Jesus.

In your name we pray,
Amen



A women's cycle race in Burkina Faso to mark international women's day. Photo credit: Christian Aid/Amy Shappe

Taking climate action as part of God's mission

In Romans, Paul suggests that creation itself is groaning and needs redemption. God has an eternal purpose for creation, and it is our role as humans to take climate action as part of His transforming mission.



Climate justice involves all of us. Because our survival is at stake, it should be amongst the most urgent theological issues for our action and meditation. Inaction could result in a life or death situation for our brothers and sisters suffering in our home countries and indeed other areas in the global South. It has to be at the top of our agenda.

Dr David Muir, Senior Lecturer of Ministerial Theology



Supporting scripture -
*Gen 1:1 | Rev 21:1-5 | Colossians 1:16-17, 20 |
Ephesians 1:10*



TAKING CLIMATE ACTION AS PART OF GOD'S MISSION

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- » To explore our God-given purpose within creation.
- » To look at God's amazing investment into our well-being.
- » To help young people recognise that stewardship is an expression of discipleship.
- » To recognise this world God called 'good' is an expression of his love towards us.

SESSION OUTCOME

- » To help our youth to recognise their role in healing, nurturing, cherishing and supporting the world whenever possible.
- » To look at tangible ways of caring for the planet.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Pens, pencils, glue, paper
- » Scissors
- » Bible
- » Cleaned, throw-away items
- » A3 paper
- » Laptop, with internet access
- » Projector and screen
- » Copies of page 27 (optional)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

God of all creation,
thank you for our world.
The magnificence of the sky
the beauty of the sea
the breathtaking wonders of the land -
all reflections of your colourful mind
and of your great love.

You made our world perfect,
then you placed us in it.
How you love us.
Help us to reflect your love
as we live within your creation.
Help us to keep, feed, love, nurture
and respect it.
And Lord, help us to ENJOY it. Amen

INTRODUCTION

Icebreaker (3 mins)

Items: Two large bags of clean rubbish. Two tables.

Collect two bagfuls of throwaway items (crisp bags, tin cans, tin foil, cling film, plastic bottles, cardboard boxes ect) and place one bag on each table. Ask the youths to empty the bags onto the table and place the items into either a reusable or non-reusable pile. Have each group examine where the other group placed the items making changes where possible. Inform them that we throw away more than is necessary or healthy for our planet. Much of it can be recycled or used for some other purpose.

Introduction

We will be looking at the Genesis 1 story of creation. It is a narrative of great design, craftsmanship and purpose. It is also a story of partnership between God and humankind. It's one of God handing over the reigns of his grand design into the hands of his prized creation. He called Adam and Eve to stewardship; to look after it, maintaining harmony and care within the world. That mandate, to look after creation, is still the heartbeat of God today.



OPEN THE WORD

Theological Understanding of Creation

(5 mins)

Creation itself

Genesis 1:1-26; 31.

As the text is read, ask the youths to take note of how many times it's stated God saw that his creation was good.

Question:

- » How would you describe the character of God based on the creation story?

The world is beautiful. This beauty reflects the heart of God. It is not randomly created. It's crafted by the colourful, artistic and scientific mind of God and through his power.

'God saw that it was good.'

Question:

- » How many times is it stated, 'God saw it was good'. (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)
- » What words would you use to describe God's creation?

God crafted the world for the joy it would bring him. He created humankind for added pleasure and communion and to share the world with him. He was, and is, proud of his creation. This amazing creation is an expression of his amazing love towards us. He created it healthy and good.

Consequences of humankind failing in their duty (5-15mins)

There are always consequences to wrongdoing. Adam and Eve later disobeyed God's command and the world suffered for it.

Cursed be the ground

Genesis 3:17-18

Since the disobedience of Adam and Eve the Earth has struggled to stay healthy. Their disobedience affected all creation - the land was cursed.

Creation groaning

Romans 8: 21-22

These verses tell us how the world has been groaning under the effects of decay and disease. Today the effects are seen around the globe.

Sustaining its beauty and health is now of the utmost importance.

Video: 'His epic message will make you want to save the world': short film showcase National Geographic (4:05 mins)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=B-nEYsyRIYo>

Climate change in the more vulnerable regions (5 mins)

Climate change is a global crisis but poorer countries are experiencing it devastating effects more than most.

Brainstorm:

What are the consequences of climate change for poorer countries and small islands?

Extreme weathers: Storm surges, hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, rising temperatures, erosion.

Vital infrastructures are threatened: Water resources, fisheries, coral reefs, agricultural resources and tourism income.

Poorer countries contribute far less to greenhouse gas damage than richer countries yet they suffer the results of climate change more.

Question (Optional):

- » Why do you think this is?
- » Why do you think small islands are at greater risk from climate change?

'Put simply, small islands are vulnerable to climate change because there is nowhere to go as the sea rises, nowhere to hide when extreme weather such as hurricanes arrive.'

(How does climate change affect a small islands. www.encyclopedia.com)

African Mountainous Regions (3mins)

In some mountainous African regions extreme weather has swept away weather defences causing sudden floods, soil erosion and landslides, even burying some settlements and farms.

Imagine you are living in this mountainous area and you suddenly hear a distant rumbling and then you feel the ground shaking beneath you.

Question:

- » What are the different feelings you would be experiencing?
- » What would or could you do?

ACTIVITY

Personal Responsibility (5-15 mins)

The Mandate: Stewardship

Read Genesis 1:26; 2:15; Psalm 8:6-8

Ask the youths what they understand from these scripture passages.

- » Environmental stewardship is our responsibility: to protect, sustain and restore creation.
- » God trusts us enough to place the protection of this planet into our hands.

'Dear Future Generation: Sorry' With lyrics by Prince Ea (6:02. Finish at 4:50mins) (Optional)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eRLJscAlk1M>

As the young people watch this video ask them to make a note of the line that really speaks to them, then ask one or two to share them afterwards.

Optional (4-6 mins)

Photocopy or cut out the statements on climate change (page 27).

Ask the youths to:

- » Place the statements in order of importance. After this, allow them to give reasons for the order they chose.

Or

- » Point out which statement they feel is the most important and why.

God has asked us to take charge of all he has created. This is a massive responsibility but he has given us authority over the Earth so, although it may be a big task, it is not impossible. If God has given us the authority to take care of our world he will give us the ability to make a difference to our environment.

Getting involved (10-14 mins)

'Dear future Generations: Sorry' With Lyrics by Prince Ea (4:50 – 6:02 = 1:12mins) (Optional)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eRLJscAlk1M>

Here Prince Ea talks about an outreach he is involved with.

Arrange your youth into smaller groups and ask them to think of ways they, along side their church, can involve themselves with climate change. Ask them to share their ideas.

Suggestions may include:

- » Organise a conference
- » Organise a climate change service
- » Create a climate change action team
- » Organise a peaceful campaign/protest
- » Speak out through craft, eg create a collage from rubbish promoting preservation

Discuss how they could implement their ideas within/on behalf of the church.

CLOSE AND FINAL PRAYER

Closing Reflection (4 min)

It has been said that the last decade was the warmest on record. Global warming is harming our world. More than 1 million species are at risk of extinction by climate change. Whole countries, often the poorer ones are in danger of freak weather changes that will cause devastation. Our world is in need of help. Yet, our world is not without solutions. It has you. It has me. God has us. He has asked us all to look after our world. He has given us the right to make positive change. You have been privileged with ability, understanding and youth. Your choices, your actions, your voice speaking from the heart of God added to many others can seek to heal the mistakes of the past. You are the new generation of hope. One step at a time, one act at a time will help to create a healthy world.

Closing Prayer

Ask for volunteers to close the session in prayer.

or

Father, you have called me to look after your world,
thank you for that opportunity.
You have made me your steward
to find ways to protect
the trees and plants of the land
the sea and the life within it
and the air we breath.

You have entrusted me to represent you
to find ways to sustain our world.
Thank you for believing in me.

Help me to do your will.
Help me to nurture your world
Give me the strength to speak
up for the health of our planet.
Stand with me
as I do whatever I can
however big or small
to keep your world shining.

Amen

FURTHER OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Recycle/Up-cycle

Ask your youths to pick an item from the rubbish used in the icebreaker and up-cycle it. Turning it into something that can be used is a great way to recycle unwanted items.

Creating a collage from rubbish

Collect a large amount of unwanted papers, boxes, bottle tops, material, string etc. Ask the group to create a collage which addresses climate change.

Reporter for the day

Photocopy the information on India, Pacific Islands, and the Caribbean (page 27). Inform the young people that they are reporters giving their TV audience the latest information on the situation caused by climate change. They can report on all three countries or focus on only one. They report back to the group.

Taking action - discussion

'Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.' Philippians 2:4.

Question: How relevant is this statement to world calamities caused by climate change.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Dear future Generations: Sorry by Prince Ea
(Rap 4:50 mins)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eRLJscAlk1M>

Dear future Generations: Sorry by Prince Ea
(Get involved 4:50-6:02)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eRLJscAlk1M>

Marvin Gaye Mercy, Mercy Me (lyrics) HD
Classicsongs

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=efiDnHS3fzk>

We can be more - a 13-year-old poet campaign
to save the world by Solti Raphael TEDxSydney
(3:45mins)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lm0r3yFh0zU>

His epic message will make you want to save the world - short film showcase National Geographic
(4:24 mins)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=B-nEYsyRIYo>

When the water is gone - Rudy Francisco (from
1:06-2:20)

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=vtJ9_mDYGNE

The dirty truth about Laundry Detergent -
Earthwash (2:03 mins)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Cgyt7H2Th-w>

Christian Climate Action

This is a possible resource which can be used
when thinking on how our youths work alongside
the church concerning climate change. Look up
this organisation before the lesson to get an
understanding of their ethos and motivations.

<https://christianclimateaction.org/>

Climate and Racial Justice film

This film from Christian Aid was created to
raise the profile and voices of people from
underrepresented communities and their
perspectives on climate and racial injustice.

<https://youtu.be/MjPt4gEV7A0>

Young Adult Climate Justice Stories Resource

A resource from Christian Aid

www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/get-involved/young-adult-climate-justice-stories

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITY STATEMENTS

The most critical issue we are facing is climate change.

If we don't address climate change there will be no future for us.

If we don't have a planet to live on, nothing else matters.

We should focus on the three Rs - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

We should make sure we do as little as possible to damage the Earth.

So many of us have enjoyed the environment but if we don't look after and protect it then future generations will not have the same choices we have had.

God gave us this entire planet to protect. If we don't protect the planet then we are throwing away God's gift.

We only have one earth, there's nothing we can go back and redo once we have destroyed it.

I wonder what Jesus would have to say about climate change.

REPORTER FOR THE DAY ACTIVITY

India: The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that India could face multiple climate change disasters over the next two decades if greenhouse gas emissions are not taken seriously. If the Indian authorities do not make positive changes by 2030 the climate catastrophe will be irreversible.

Pacific island countries: Three cyclones hit the Pacific islands between 2020 and 2021. Seawalls built as weather defences crumbled under the strong battering of water and winds leaving the water to sweep into the land. Some people had to evacuate their homes.

Caribbean: During 2020 the Caribbean experienced 30 tropical storms - including six major hurricanes. The Caribbean is still recovering. Buildings built to withstand category 4 hurricanes couldn't withstand the strong winds of the category 5 hurricanes hitting the islands.



WONDERFUL

YOUTH

WHAT DOES
CLIMATE JUSTICE
MEAN TO YOU?

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