

## Whose life is it anyway? Injustice, stewardship and the kingdom of God

### Part 3: Climate changes lives

#### Introduction to the study

This Bible study introduces the issue of climate change from a Christian perspective. We will not directly consider what the Bible says about climate change; instead we will look at some key Biblical principles and see how they could guide our respond to the issue.

Within this framework we will consider how, as God's children, we are to care for all of God's creation. Some of what this requires is more obvious than others, such as supporting farmers in developing countries through buying fair trade products. When it comes to climate change, it is often our daily habits that are put into question.

#### AIMS:

- To introduce the issue of climate change through a Biblical framework
- To help Christians grasp a greater understanding of why we should act to help tackle climate change.

**Time:** 1 hour 20 minutes

**You will need:** pieces of paper; pens, Bibles

### 1. WELCOME

*Aim: to warm up the group and introduce the topic of a Christian response to climate change*

*Time: 10 minutes*

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen, ask them to write down 5 things that they have seen recently that they thought were beautiful. Once they have finished they should share with the rest of the group what they have written. Hold a discussion with the group about whether or not the things that people have written are man made or created by God. Then ask the question of what impact the man made things may have on God's creation?

## **2. WORSHIP**

*Aim: to help people reflect on creation as part of or worship and service to God.*

*Time: 10 minutes*

Below are the words to two songs that you might find useful to help with the worship. If you have the songs on CD you can play them, simply read these words out and use as a source of prayer and motivation

### **Lord of All Creation**

Lord of all creation  
Of water, earth and sky  
The heavens are your tabernacle  
Glory to the Lord on high.

**God of wonders beyond our galaxy**  
**You are holy, holy**  
**The universe declares your majesty**  
**You are holy, holy**  
**(Lord of heaven and earth) 2x**

Early in the morning  
I will celebrate the light  
And when I stumble in the darkness  
I will call your name by night.

**God of wonders beyond our galaxy**  
**You are holy, holy**  
**The universe declares your majesty**  
**You are holy, holy**  
**(Lord of heaven and earth) 2x**

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Marc Byrd, Steve Hindalong, © 2000 Storm Boy Music

### **Creation's King**

All creation is a song  
Waiting to be sung  
All of nature like a prayer  
Waiting for a tongue  
For who will give it voice  
And make its anthem ring  
Or rise to lead a choir  
Of all created things?  
Lord hear your people sing

**Blessing honour glory power  
To Creation's King  
Songs of earth and songs of heaven  
Join as one to bring  
Blessing honour glory power  
To Creation's King**

All the nations are a song  
Waiting to be sung  
Every instrument and voice  
Created for the One  
The Maker of all things  
The Majesty above  
Who bought us back from death  
With such a costly love  
What praise could be enough?

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### 3. WORD

*3a God's gardeners*

Time: 15 minutes

Read Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:15

When God created the world and every living thing, the Bible tells us that He saw that it was very good and He took pleasure in it. We can imagine His rest on the seventh day would have been one filled with satisfaction and joy at what had been accomplished. God wanted to share the delight the world brought and what better way than to share the responsibility of looking after it. Amazingly one of the reasons why He created us was for this awesome task. We were designed to work in partnership with God to care for the whole of creation. In turn the earth would provide for all of our need. When God entered a partnership with man to look after creation, he was not doing so as a silent partner. God wanted to work closely with man to ensure all could enjoy the world around them. Mankind was to represent God here on earth and ensure that God's wonderful creation stayed 'very good'.

Unfortunately it has not turned out quite how God intended, we have not been the type of stewards God was looking for. The consequences have been enormous in so many areas including climate change.

1. Why do you think that God gave the right to resources to both mankind and also to God's other creatures? Vv29-30
2. How may God's desire for us to share the earth's resources with the rest of creation shape His call for us also to have dominion over it?
3. When God called Adam to tend His creation, how do you think He would have hoped that mankind would act?
4. In what ways have we as human beings not been good stewards of creation?
5. Why do you think we have not been the stewards that God intended us to be?
6. What are some of the effects that we and others now face because of our actions?

### **3b Global Neighbours**

*Time 25 minutes*

Read Luke 10:25-37

This portion of scripture is very familiar to many of us, the common theme of loving God with everything you have and treating your neighbour as you would like to be treated, which is displayed throughout the Bible. But in Luke we see something extra, Jesus' explanation of just who is our neighbour.

Conventionally we may think of our neighbours as people who live close by us, maybe people that we know. However Jesus described a different relationship from which we become each other's neighbour. Not one of locality but one of need and responsibility.

The Samaritan's act of kindness turned him from being a stranger and in many respects an enemy to the person in need into a neighbour. In the process the law expert's question got turned on its head, with Jesus showing what the real question should have been. Who can I be a neighbour to?

But climate change also adds another dimension to who our neighbours are. Our lives are interconnected in so many ways. What we do here in the UK impacts on others, not just in our own communities, but also in places that we may not have even heard of. On issues such as trade this is quite easy to understand, we can clearly see the link between unfair trade rules and those they affect. Although it might be a little less obvious, climate change is no exception. The passage in Luke is about our relationship with God and also with those affected by what we do. Advances in technology mean that that our neighbours, or those our lives effect, are now not just those in our community but also people in other communities maybe thousands of miles away who we may not know.

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One of the ways that our lives affect those maybe thousands of miles away, is through the pollution we emit. Greenhouse gases have increased dramatically over recent years, and are now 34 per cent higher than they were in pre industrial times. This has caused more of the sun's energy to be trapped in our atmosphere, increasing the earth's temperature, resulting in climatic changes.

This rise in greenhouse gases is primarily down to us using more energy in our everyday lives. Often it is the things that make our life simpler, things that we take for granted that are causing the problem. Our lifestyles in the UK and other developed nations are the main cause of climate change. Yet at the same time, it is the world's poorest people who suffer its effects the most. Climate change related symptoms such as floods, droughts, sea level rises and unreliable seasons are causing havoc and destroying lives in the developing world. Cutting down on the energy we use has become part of the 'mandate to love our neighbour'.

Our usage of the earth's resources contributes to climate change, causing volatile weather patterns and changing seasons. This impacts on the lives of poor people across the world, making their lives and livelihoods increasingly fragile. Good stewardship of the earth's resources, such as fossil fuels, will help slow down the speed at which climate change is occurring and lessen its impact on poor communities.

### Questions

1. How do you personally understand climate change in light of God's command for us to Love our neighbour as ourselves?
2. In what ways do we use a lot more energy now than people did 100 years ago?
3. What can we do to try and cut down on our greenhouse gas emissions? (Use the Tearfund booklet For tomorrow too to help generate discussion)
4. Why do you think many people find it hard to make lifestyle changes to help tackle climate change?
5. How can we ensure that our lifestyles connect more positively with people in developing countries?

#### **4. WITNESS**

*Aim: to give space for people to reflect on their own attitudes in this area and ask for God's help to change*

*Time: 25 minutes*

##### **Testimonies from across the world**

Read out the following testimonies about the impact of climate change taken from communities Tearfund works with

##### **Mr Mengesha Beyene – age 82, Abay Atir Village, Ethiopia**

Mr Mengesha recollected that he used to get much harvest in the past. Sorghum (a type of cereal) used to be plentiful and it took his family three to four days to bring in the harvest into the granaries. He explained that grain used to be stored in pits dug in the ground, each holding approximately 5,000 kg. In those days, the harvest used to last for at least two years. He pointed that nowadays, the harvest does not last more than seven months. People tend to borrow money from money lenders and rely more and more on market purchase. For him, the sad indicator of the whole problem is that there are very few households who even own granaries these days. The small harvest is placed in sacks and kept inside the *a but* until it runs out.

##### **River of Life, Tearfund partner in Malawi**

The weather has been changing for many years. It is just that we have not been taking note of it. I am 51 years old and I remember when I was young experiencing a nice cool weather and receiving good rains in our village. Big streams would be flowing with water throughout the year. I would be walking to school with a good forest cover on the way. It was beautiful. It is not now.

##### **Eficor, Tearfund partner in India**

For the last five years we had no good rains and then last year we had flooding. It was devastating for us. Eight people lost their lives and more than 1,000 houses collapsed in the district (Balangir). It was a shock to the people because almost all the rivers were swollen, many trees were uprooted, houses collapsed and animals died. Crops were ruined and even now, many people have been unable to rebuild their homes – they lost everything.

**Take a moment in silence to reflect on what you have just heard, these are just a few examples of what millions of people are going through everyday. Ask God to help them cope with the circumstances they find themselves in.**

**In groups or pairs pray for each other to be able to put some of the suggestions discussed earlier into practice.**

##### **Immediate action**

Why not get the group to sign the Stop Climate Chaos pledge committing yourselves to reducing your personal emissions and calling on the government to cut our national emissions. (Available from Tearfund).