

# RUBBISH TALKS

Three suggested talks for you  
to use or adapt for your church.

tearfund

**ACTION**

This resource comprises three suggested talks for you to use or adapt for your church. Whether you've got a whole sermon slot, or just time for a quick announcement, you can help turn the tide on plastic pollution by sharing Tearfund's campaign with your church.

Please email us at [campaigns@tearfund.org](mailto:campaigns@tearfund.org) at least two weeks before you speak at your church so we can send you enough *Rubbish Campaign* cards for everyone to sign.

Thank you for supporting the campaign and inviting others to get on board too!

## 3-MINUTE TALK – JUST USE POWERPOINT SLIDES 3 & 4

### SLIDE 3:

This morning I'm going to talk rubbish.

Plastic is all around us, isn't it? In the media, in our shopping trolleys and in our recycling bins. But we don't often hear about the huge impact rubbish has on people living in poverty. Did you know 2 billion people in the world's poorest countries are living and working among piles of waste, because they don't have their rubbish collected? That's one in four people in the world without waste collection!

These people have no choice but to burn their rubbish to get rid of it, or throw it in waterways, or live among it. And that means they're breathing toxic air, drinking polluted water and battling sickness. Up to a million people die each year because of pollution from waste – that's one person every 30 seconds.

Daiane Maria is 23 years old and lives with her sister, her husband and their children in Recife, Brazil. She says she often sees soft drinks bottles in the river near her home. Plastic waste such as this creates a breeding ground for disease-carrying mosquitoes, and it blocks waterways and drains, which causes flooding.

She says, 'When it floods, everyone gets diarrhoea and sickness. Just this week I had to help my daughter, who was vomiting. Another problem is the rats. There are lots of rats. I get very down but there is nothing I can do about it, because I don't have anywhere else to go.'

Huge global companies such as Coca-Cola, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever are making things worse for communities such as Daiane's by selling billions of products in single-use plastic packaging. That's packaging that gets used ONCE and is then thrown away. They do this knowing that people in poorer communities have no safe way to get rid of their waste.

This is a rubbish situation for Daiane's community and others like hers. But it doesn't have to be like this. Tearfund is bringing together the voices of Christians in this country and around the world to say this matters and more needs to be done.

## SLIDE 4:

Under your seat is a campaign card. I'd love for you to sign it and add your voice to this global effort to transform the lives of people living in poverty. Together, we're calling on these companies to stop being rubbish and to take responsibility for the plastic waste mountains their products are creating in poorer countries.

Will you take a moment now to fill out the card and add your voice? There's also a space for you to make your own pledge to reduce your plastic waste.

[Leave a few minutes for people to finish completing them.]

When you've finished, I'd love you to come and put your card in this big bin at the front, as a symbolic act that we want this big global mess cleared up.

Thank you.

[Pray – thanking God for creation, repenting of our part in damaging it, and asking for his help both as we try to live differently and as we try to inspire these companies to change.]

## 15-MINUTE TALK – WITH POWERPOINT

### SLIDE 1:

Good morning.

This morning I'd like to talk rubbish with you.

Plastic is all around us, isn't it? In the media, in our shopping trolleys and in our recycling bins. You can't go very long without another TV show that mentions rubbish, or another news article popping up. It's a big deal – and we all know the amount of waste being produced is a big problem.

### SLIDE 2:

Did you know that in the UK we throw away enough plastic to fill two double-decker buses every 30 seconds?

Most people have heard about the effect of plastics on our oceans and wildlife, but what we don't often hear about is the huge impact it has on people living in poverty.

### SLIDE 3:

Did you know that today 2 billion people in the world's poorest countries are living and working among piles of waste, because they don't have their rubbish collected? Can you imagine that? That's one in four people in the world without waste collection!

These people have no choice but to burn their rubbish to get rid of it, or throw it in waterways, or live among it. And that means they're breathing toxic air, drinking polluted water and battling sickness. Up to a million people die each year due to pollution from waste – that's one person every 30 seconds – and each day the waste mountains are growing.

People such as Daiane Maria know what this is like. Daiane is 23 years old and lives with her sister, her husband and their children in Recife, Brazil. She says, 'It only has to rain and everything floods. A lot of rubbish comes down the river... What I see most are water bottles and fizzy drink bottles, the type of bottles that are not returnable.'

Plastic waste such as this creates a breeding ground for disease-carrying mosquitoes, and blocks waterways and drains, which causes flooding.

Daiane says, 'When it floods, everyone gets diarrhoea and sickness. Just this week I had to help my daughter, who was vomiting. Another problem is the rats. There are lots of rats. I get very down but there is nothing I can do about it, because I don't have anywhere else to go.'

In Romans 8, we read that creation is 'groaning', that it's 'subjected to frustration'. We see this so clearly today when we see the natural world littered with plastics. It's this damaged and groaning creation that we are called to take care of, and when Jesus calls us to love our neighbours, this includes people in poverty, near and far.

Creation is a wonderful gift that reveals God's love and generosity to us, but creation, too, has been broken by sin.

Colossians 1:20 says that through Jesus' death, he's made a way for all things, all of creation, everything on earth and in heaven, to be reconciled with God.

Today, as the people of God, we are called to care for creation as good stewards, to be restorers of everything that sin has broken, and to care for our global neighbours.

We can do this by living in a way that shows greater care for creation and for people living in poverty – and that enables all people everywhere to enjoy the blessing of creation that God intended for everyone. It's a question of justice.

Together we can make small changes to reduce our plastic use – at home and at church. When we do this, we're valuing what God has given us and following Jesus in loving our neighbours as ourselves. Even making small swaps such as buying our vegetables loose, reusing bags and carrying a reusable cup can be an act of worship to the God who loves justice and delights in creation.

And we can also make a difference by speaking up to corporations who are making this rubbish problem worse, to say, 'Enough is enough.'

Did you know that huge global companies such as Coca-Cola, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever sell billions of products in single-use plastic packaging in poorer countries? That's packaging that gets used ONCE and is then thrown away. They do this in full knowledge that people have no safe way to get rid of the plastic waste and will have no choice but to burn, discard or live among it.

Businesses such as these have a vital role – and many are taking steps to reduce single-use plastic waste. But not many have made any ambitious commitments yet. And as these global companies are keen to sell more products in developing countries, without these commitments the waste mountains are likely to continue to grow.

Many of us will be customers – possibly very regular customers – of these companies, perhaps without even realising. Even if you never drink Coke but you have sipped a Sprite, Innocent smoothie, or a latte at Costa Coffee, then you have been a customer of Coca-Cola. You've probably given money to Nestlé if you've eaten KitKats, Smarties, Milkybars and Häagen-Dazs ice cream, or drunk Perrier water and Nescafé coffee. Did you realise that PepsiCo also owns Walkers Crisps, Doritos, Tropicana and Quaker Oats? And if you've got Persil, Dove or Domestos products at home, or Ben and Jerry's, Wall's and Magnum ice creams in your freezer – and if you can't live without Marmite – then you're a customer of Unilever.

This matters because these companies care about what we think, and as their customers we have a powerful voice. Tearfund is bringing together the voices of Christians in this country and around the world to say that more needs to be done on this issue. Each of us has the opportunity to use our voices to speak up, and we can use our voices to call on companies to do the right thing.

Some of you may know people who work or have worked for these companies, or you may do so yourself. Most people want to do the right thing, and we believe that businesses such as these, and people who work for them, can be an incredible force for change. So we are reaching out to these companies and having conversations, because if these four companies made four 'Not Rubbish' commitments, it could help to transform the lives of people in poverty. Imagine being part of that! Well, we can.

## SLIDE 4:

Under your seat is a campaign card. I'd love for you to sign it and to add your voice to this global effort to transform the lives of people living in poverty. Together, we're calling on these companies to stop being rubbish and to take responsibility for the plastic waste mountains their products are creating in poorer countries.

This rubbish campaign will change lives. Will you take a moment now to fill out the card and add your voice? There's also a space for you to make your own pledge to reduce your plastic waste.

[Leave a few minutes for people to finish completing them.]

When you've finished, I'd love you to come and put your card in this big bin at the front, as a symbolic act that we want this big global mess cleared up.

Thank you.

[Pray – thanking God for creation, repenting of our part in damaging it, and asking for his help both as we try to live differently and as we try to inspire these companies to change.]

## ALL-AGE OR SUNDAY SCHOOL TALK

God has created a beautiful world for us to live in. And he has given us the job of taking care of it (Genesis 1:31 and 2:15). **Can anyone here give me some examples of how we can care for the earth?**

[Take examples. You'll know if there is anything local worth mentioning such as a wildlife trust or conservation project. If no one has mentioned rubbish, then introduce the topic of caring for the world by not wasting the earth's resources and being careful with how we dispose of the waste we do create.]

### SLIDE 1:

Well, this morning I'm going to give you a rubbish talk! I wonder if you have ever thought about rubbish. When we throw our stuff away, where does it go? Where IS 'away', exactly? What happens to it there? And does it have a bad effect on people and nature?

### SLIDE 2:

Did you know that in the UK we throw away enough plastic to fill two double-decker buses every 30 seconds?

[Maybe you can estimate how long it would therefore take to fill your church building with plastic? Or ask for guesses?]

Just think about that for a minute: it's a lot of plastic. Much of this plastic will have only been used once.

And I'm afraid there is more bad news... The world's rubbish problem is hurting people, particularly poor people in other countries.

### SLIDE 3:

People like Daiane, who lives in Brazil. A quarter of all the people in the world do not have any rubbish collections or safe ways to get rid of their waste. Imagine that. **What would you do with your rubbish if lorries didn't come to collect it?**

[If you have time, ask four young people to come up and separate them into groups of three and one. Speak to the three – you live in places where lorries come round and collect rubbish. But (now look at the one) you don't. Ask: what would you do with your rubbish?... etc]

People like Daiane and her family in Brazil have no choice but to burn it or leave it piled up around their homes or in the river and waterways nearby.

You are probably thinking that it's not very nice to have to live like this. But actually it's worse than that – it's dangerous! Rubbish attracts flies, rats and mosquitoes – these all bring sickness. Burning the rubbish creates harmful gases, which again brings sickness. And rubbish in a river causes blockages, which makes it flood when it rains.

We know that God loves people and creation so much that he sent Jesus (John 3:16). And that he's given us the very special task of caring for nature as well as loving our neighbours.

**So does anyone have any ideas of how can we respond to our neighbours who live in different countries and to creation with the same love that God shows us? Shouldn't we stop producing and throwing away waste in ways that hurt the earth?**

[Take some ideas, and if appropriate refer back to some ideas people gave at the beginning of the talk.]

Together we can make small changes to reduce our plastic use – at home and at church. When we do this, we're valuing what God has given us and following Jesus in loving our neighbours as ourselves. Even making small swaps such as buying vegetables loose, reusing bags or carrying a reusable cup can be a way to worship God who created everything.

[If your church is going to do a waste walk, plastic-free picnic or other activity then you can use this part to let people know how they can join that.]

Another very powerful thing we can do is to speak up to companies who are making this rubbish problem worse.

**Who has heard of Coca-Cola? PepsiCo? What do they make?**

[People will probably say soft drinks. They may not know that Coca-Cola also owns Sprite, Innocent drinks and Costa Coffee. PepsiCo owns Walkers crisps, Doritos, Tropicana and Quaker Oats.]

**Nestlé? What plastic products can you think of?**

[People may mention Nesquik milk drinks or chocolate products. They'll also have given money to Nestlé if they've eaten KitKats, Smarties, Milkybars, Häagen-Dazs, Perrier water or Nescafé coffee.]

**Unilever?**

[People may suggest toiletries or household products. Brands Unilever owns include Persil, Dove, Domestos, Ben & Jerry's, Wall's, Magnum and Marmite.]

[If possible, have some of the plastic items from these companies. You could ask for some young volunteers to come and hold them up.]

Did you know companies such as Coca-Cola, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever sell billions of products in single-use plastic packaging in poorer countries? That's packaging which is only used ONCE before being thrown away. They do this knowing that people there have no safe way to get rid of their plastic waste.

Today, we're going to join Tearfund in asking these companies to stop the rubbish, and to take responsibility for their single-use plastics.

## SLIDE 4:

Under your seat is an action card. Perhaps you could fill it in as a family 'asking the companies to change' and you could also pledge to reduce your own plastic use.

This *Rubbish Campaign* will change lives. Will you take a moment now to fill out the card and add your voice?

[Leave a few minutes for people to finish completing them.]

When you've finished, I'd love you to come and put them in this big bin at the front, as a symbolic act that we want this big global mess cleared up.

Thank you.