

Small Group Material: Creation Care 3

Future hope starts now

NB Keep things moving! There's a lot in this study. Remember to make time for prayer.

Keep these two themes in mind in today's study: 1) God is going to give us a new earth anyway. What does it matter if we trash this one? 2) New = 'renewed' because Jesus doesn't throw out the old. He inhabits and transforms it.

Welcome (10 mins)

Either: What signs of ageing or weathering are you starting to feel in your body? or How do you think Chipping Norton would be different if Jesus was the mayor?

Word (40 mins)

Read Romans 8.19-25

What do you know about the persecution of Christians in Rome during this time? That would help explain Paul's words of comfort in this passage. (Nero was on the throne)

What do these verses tell us about creation's past, present and future state?

In what ways is creation 'subjected to frustration' and 'groaning'? What was its cause? cf Gen 3.17-19. How are the pains of creation's groaning also hopeful?

How have you also known 'a groaning in your spirit' to see the final triumph over sin and death?

For discussion: What message does this give us in a time of environmental disaster? Does it suggest any sources of hope?

Read Rev 21.1-5

What we are part of now can only ever be the palest reflection of that day, but just imagine all the best things of this world, all the most beautiful, most inspiring, truest and loveliest things in all creation, combined with the glorious perfection of God's presence in heaven.

Imagine God once more making his home amongst human beings (Revelation 21:3). Imagine creation set free from its bondage to decay, all things released from death and suffering, and earth and heaven reconciled to God. As followers of Jesus, let this be our vision, and let this be our mission." Planetwise p.142

Where will the new world be lived out? On earth or in heaven? Why do you think so? cf v1,2. Who will be the residents of the 'new Jerusalem', v3? Note: the word used for 'new' has the meaning of 'renewed'!

What excites you about the Bible's vision for creation's future?

What signs of this wonderfully full vision can you see already?

What steps would help bring about this vision more fully?

Worship (15 mins)

We have damaged the world not only through inadequate information or poor decisions, but through selfishness. Every time we are too lazy to walk to the local shops and take the car, we make a spiritual choice to be selfish, and say no to treating the earth as if it really is the Lord's. Whenever we buy cheap meat without asking whether the animal has been intensively and cruelly farmed, we show disrespect to God as creator. When we know the facts about energy wastage, and the damage that excessive Carbon Dioxide does to the atmosphere, and yet carelessly leave the television on standby or leave lights on around the house, we are not only harming the planet but also sinning against God and our fellow humanity" Planetwise p.41

- How do you feel about these comments? Spend some time as a group in personal and then corporate confession.
- Stand to sing together: All creatures of our God and King
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d3gO6qDLNA>

Witness (20 mins)

Watch the 4 minute video by Sir John Houghton, the bottom one at <https://atyourservice.arocha.org/en/hope-for-planet-earth-2009-resource-pack/>

This week work out your carbon footprint. Here's a suitable one: <https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>. When you get together next time, discuss how you are going to lower your carbon footprint.