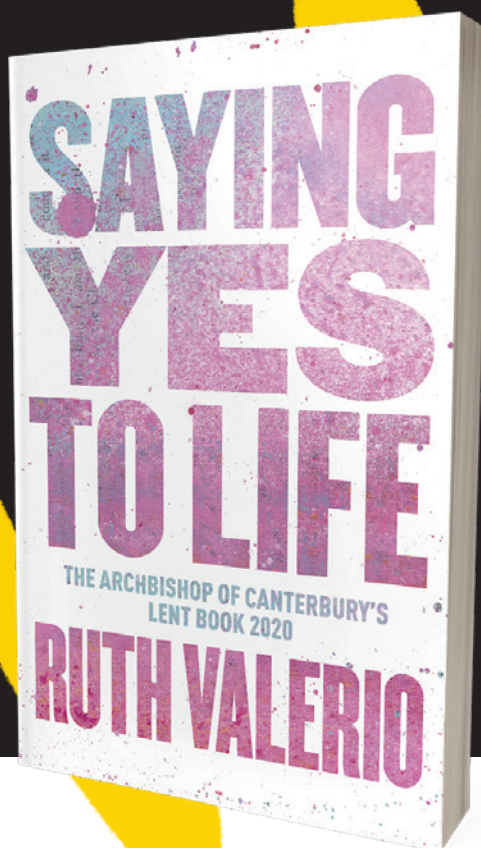


WE ARE ____

SAYING YES TO LIFE



INTRODUCTION

This series is founded on *Saying Yes To Life* Ruth Valerio's Lent book.

The Youth Series has been brought to you by Dot Tyler who is part of the We Are Tearfund community. We believe that a young generation can, together, bring an end to extreme poverty. We Are Tearfund exists to champion young voices to speak up and inspire you to follow Jesus in your ordinary lives as you make a difference for our world. To find out more and join the community, find us on social media or YouTube @WeAreTearfund.



tearfund

SESSION 1: LET THERE BE LIGHT

SESSION OVERVIEW:

For the next hour, you and your group will explore the theme of light and we will be encouraged to remember the importance of God as saviour AND creator. We will hear real stories and be inspired to take action.

YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, flip chart paper, prizes, blindfolds, stuff for an 'assault course', print outs, videos and slides downloaded, tealights.

INTRO GAME: BLINDFOLDED ASSAULT COURSE - 10 MINS

You will need: assault course route (chairs, ropes, tables etc. Anything you have lying around). 2 blindfolds, prizes for winners.

To start our session, we'll play a game to highlight the importance of light.

1. Set up an assault course (as elaborate as your risk assessment allows!). For ease of time, you might need to set up multiple courses so that multiple pairs can compete at the same time.
2. Ask everyone to get into pairs.
3. One of the pair wears the blindfold and after you say 'go', will be guided through the assault course by the other member of the pair shouting instructions from the start line.
4. Winners are the pairs who do this the quickest.

THEME ACTIVITY: LIGHT UP - 10 MINS

You will need: 1 piece of flip chart paper per group with a lightbulb drawn on it. Pens.

Light is a regular theme throughout the Bible. God uses it to help us understand big ideas (the person and purpose of Jesus is described as the light and life of the world in Hebrews 1:13). God also uses light to guide his people into his purposes (the pillar of fire guiding the Israelites out of Egypt in Exodus 13:21-22).

1. Use this sheet to write down any parts of the Bible that talk about light and write it on the sheet. (Yes, you can use Google!)
2. Feedback ideas to the group.

SESSION 1: LET THERE BE LIGHT

BIBLE DISCUSSION: FOCUSED EXPLORATION - 10 MINS

You will need: each group to have access to a Bible.

1. In small groups, share out these passages: Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 33:6-9, Job 38:1,4-7
2. Invite the group to answer the following questions:
 - If you had to describe this passage in three words, what would they be?
 - What does the passage tell you about who God is?
 - What does the passage tell you about who we are?
3. Feedback thoughts to the group

In the feedback, you are looking to draw out themes of God as creator and humankind as creation. We are positioned within a bigger story of God and creation. There is only light and dark. Nothing in between.

INPUT: LIGHT AND DARK. GOD WHO SAVES AND CREATES - 3 MINS

These passages are just a few of the thousands of ways God reminds us that we are part of his creation. We are often very good at thinking about our God who saves us, who deals with our shame and guides us toward a life in fullness. This is the true, beautiful and divine grace of God. But it isn't the whole story of who God is.

Too often we forget that the God who saves us, also made all of creation. More than that, he is also saving and restoring creation, just like he is for us. Our invitation this Lent is to remember who our faith is built on, to remember this extraordinary creation and creator. An invitation to live out an extraordinary faith which doesn't make God small, to live out a rebellious faith that looks like those first disciples who shunned cultural norms and followed Jesus whatever the cost.

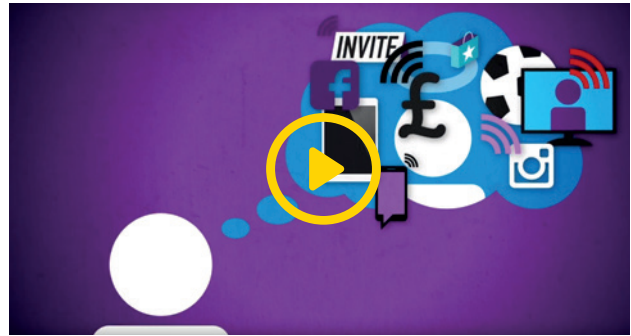
The light of the world is our saving God AND our creator God. We are designed to have a better relationship with creation than what we have now. To do this, we need to refocus ourselves on bringing these characteristics of God together: Creator and Saviour.

VIDEO: FAITH REBORN - 5 MINS

You will need: this video link www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU_YjZHgxb8&feature=youtu.be and a method of showing it. Optional: slide with the response prayer.

Use this video to help people think about their response to a big story of God and big invitation to be part of it.

You may want to use the prayer as a reflection after the video.



Blessed be you Light of Life,
source of the sacred flame within each of us,
light which the darkness cannot put out.
I rise up with you this day.
I rest with you this night.
Celtic prayer by priest and chaplain, Tess Ward

INPUT: WHAT IN THE WORLD? - 2 MINS

In the story of God, light is a source of beauty and life. But the same is not always true in our world. In the words of Ruth Valerio (page 19 of *Saying Yes To Life*)

'Electricity and heat generation is one of the largest sources of CO2 emissions, and if we are to provide light to the world – as well as heat, cool air and cooking fuel – then we have to do that in ways that use renewable sources and neither pollute the environment nor pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.'

Put simply: our current way of life (the ways we create light and do life) is causing serious harm to our creation. CO2 emissions are causing a climate crisis and a devastating impact on our planet and causing people to live in poverty.

ACTIVITY: INTRODUCING PHUL - 8 MINS

You will need: a print the 'Introducing Phul' sheet below. Paper and pens. Flip chart paper with the outline of a person drawn on.

1. Split the group into pairs. In each pair, nominate a 'Listener' and a 'Describer'. Give the 'Describer' a copy of the 'Introducing Phul' sheet. Ask them not to let their partner see the writing.
2. Set a timer for two minutes. The 'Describer' has two minutes to introduce Phul to their partner. The 'Listener' must remember as much as they can. (Recommend that they don't just narrate what's written on the paper – but make it memorable!)
3. Set the timer again for 30 seconds and ask the 'Listener' to write down everything they can remember. No help from the 'Describer'!
4. Ask each group to share what they remembered. As they share, write up their answers on the flip chart so that the group can get to know Phul.

SESSION 1: LET THERE BE LIGHT

INTRODUCING PHUL

Phul Kumari is 32 years old and lives with her husband, three daughters and a son in Kalanga, a village in Nepal. In the past, the village had no electricity and this had a massively detrimental impact on Phul and her family's life. She had to get up at 4am to grind their maize, wheat and corn by hand. It took so long that the whole family had to be involved and help. For light, they relied on kerosene. Phul had to walk a long way to buy it, travelling up to four hours on foot, and it was so expensive that sometimes she could not even afford it. So, to help make ends meet and enable her to buy the kerosene they needed, her children also got up early in the morning to work. At night, they had only the dim, smoky light of the kerosene lamp to study by which often meant they didn't finish their homework, so they were getting behind with their studies and their education was suffering.

The good news is that now the village has a micro-hydropower plant, thanks to an organisation called United Mission to Nepal (UMN), generating electricity that provides light to the community. This has transformed

their lives! 'Before having hydroelectricity, our community felt like our lives were on a hard trajectory but after having electricity, we feel very happy because we are inside the light.' With electric lights at home, Phul's children are now getting all their homework done, the rate of school attendance is increasing because they can do their homework and their education is improving. She is a member of the school management committee and regularly hears from teachers about her children's good progress at school. 'I want my children to have a different life. They might be engineers or doctors. I hope my children will be good in the community.' She can also now bring the family's grain to the newly opened mill – which uses water run-off from the plant – where the mill owner will grind it in just an hour, thereby saving the whole family time. Now that she has the time – and the inspiration from other businesses opening in the village – she is starting her own poultry and vegetable farm. The micro-hydro plant provides light for the farm and heating to keep the chickens warm. 'Now I can engage in business. I support my children so they can go to school.'

Excerpt from Say Yes to Life (page 13, 14)

INPUT: SO WHAT? - 5 MINS

Our world is not a good reflection of light. Often, we don't live as though creation is core to the heart of God... YET.

There is a better future available but it takes us all to make a difference. There are three things we can do:

LEARN: Be informed, read our Bibles, get to know how much God loves creation, find out how we are doing in our care of creation. A good start is to follow @WeAreTearfund on social media or YouTube. This content exists to inspire and support you to make a difference. (Allow a few moments for people to get their phones out and follow. We want social media to be a good influence in their lives.)

TAKE ACTION: Why not ask your church leaders in the coffee break after church whether your church is using renewable electricity!

USE YOUR VOICES: The We Are Tearfund community are inviting young people from all over the UK to speak up about creation, to be light in dark places. Young people have written an open letter to the leaders of every nation asking them to care more about creation and do whatever it takes to fight the climate crisis. We will present this at The United Nations Climate Change Conference in November 2020. Join this open letter by signing it now.

(Leader: you can order copies of this for your group to sign and we will post them to you free of charge. Or you can do this online at weare.tearfund.org. Allow time for people to sign.)

PRAYER: TEALIGHTS - 7 MINS

You will need: enough tealights for one each.

1. Give out tealights for everyone to take one home.
2. Invite everyone to think of one thing they want to pray for – they might want to thank God for his creation, pray for Phul and others like her, or pray for our global leaders to make good decisions.
3. Pray as your group feels able.
4. Take the tealights home and put it somewhere you'll look every day. When you see the tealight, remember to pray.

SESSION 2: LET THE WATERS BE SEPARATED

SESSION OVERVIEW:

For the next hour, you and your group will explore the theme of water. The relational core of God and how we might live differently because we are part of something bigger. We will investigate some impacts of our lifestyle and how we could make a positive difference.

YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, flip chart paper, prizes, random objects with holes in, 2 chairs per team, 1 bucket of water and 1 empty bucket per team, slides and videos ready to show.

INTRO GAME: KEEPING WATER - 10 MINS

You will need: random objects with holes in, 2 chairs per team, 1 bucket of water and 1 empty bucket per team, towels/something to dry the floor, prizes for winners.

To start our session, we'll play a game to introduce the theme of water but before you tell them the theme:

1. Get the group into teams (make a decision based on time available and size of group).
2. Set out all your objects with holes in and invite each group to choose an object – no context, they just have to choose one!
3. Put two chairs out per team on opposite sides of the room. Put buckets of water on chairs on one side, and empty buckets on the opposite chairs.
4. Rules: the bucket cannot move. It's a relay and every team member must participate. You can only move water using the object you initially chose. You have three minutes.
5. Winners have the most water in their other bucket at the end of the time.

If you have time, you could play twice – ask them to take two objects at the start.

SESSION 2: LET THE WATERS BE SEPARATED

THEME ACTIVITY: WATER DEPENDENCE - 10 MINS

You will need: Scenarios below on the slide or printed out.

In the same groups, invite everyone to imagine how they would undertake the following scenarios if they didn't have access to water, OR too much water.

You have NO access to water. How would you:

- 1 - get ready for school?
- 2 - get food and cook dinner for everyone in your house?

There is 1 metre of water EVERYWHERE. How would you:

- 1 - get to school?
- 2 - take your dog for a walk?

These might sound like silly questions with some amusing answers, but let's find out more about our theme for today.

INPUT: THEME - 2 MINS

Our theme today is based on the next verse in Genesis 1:6-8.

'And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.'

We will find out why water is so important in the Bible, and find out what the world is doing about water.

BIBLE DISCUSSION: FOCUSED EXPLORATION - 10 MINS

You will need: each group to have access to a Bible.

In small groups, share out these passages: 1 Kings 18:22-45, Mark 4:35-41, Matthew 3:13-17.

Invite the group to answer the following questions:

- If you had to describe this passage in three words, what would they be?
- What does the passage tell you about who God is?
- What does the passage tell you about his relationship with creation?

Feedback thoughts to the group

In the feedback, you are looking to draw out themes of God as creator and his relationship with his creation. Creation (in this case, water) responds to the might and power of God (1 Kings 18:45), creation responds to his authority and direction (Mark 4). Jesus also role models a relationship with creation as part of our own discipleship (Matthew 3). Baptism (whichever way your church does it) is a representation of water cleansing and bringing new life.

SESSION 2: LET THE WATERS BE SEPARATED

INPUT: ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS - 3 MINS

Here's something we know: God himself is in relationship. By his own very nature, he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Tim Keller describes this as a dance – as though the three persons of God dance together in community.

And so, is it any surprise that we find relationship embedded right throughout the natural world? You'll have done the water cycle in primary school – one of nature's expressions of relationship, mimicking the dance of God as water moves through the cycle.

Likewise, animals and life have a cycle. In the great words of the Lion King (feel free to sing!) - 'It's the circle, the circle of life.'

Water demonstrates something of the characteristics of God. It is part of his creation but what is its relationship status?

Sadly, it's not all going well. Where there should be rivers, there are droughts. Where there should be dry land, there are floods. We are living in unprecedented times. We are seeing this in the UK with all the flooding. The impact on the UK is a tiny glimpse of what is going on elsewhere.

INTRODUCING: JUMANA - 3 MINS

Remember back to our activity at the beginning of the session where we imagined what we would do in different scenarios. One of those was, how would we make a meal for our family if we had no water. Let me read to you a real story.

India is in the grip of a terrible drought and, globally, millions of people suffered drought in 2018: three million in Kenya; 2.2 million in Afghanistan; 2.5 million in Central America... the list goes on. These are overwhelming numbers, but behind them are individuals struggling to survive; struggling to grow their crops to feed their families and make a living; struggling to feed their animals; struggling to keep clean.

One such person is Jumana, who lives in Chad. Chad has been suffering the impacts of a changing climate, which has meant that the rains have become unpredictable and there have been devastating food crises on and off for years. Jumana has five children and has already lost one child and her father to hunger. There have been times when Jumana has resorted to digging through ants' nests in 50 degrees of heat to collect seeds buried there, taking them home for her children to eat. Every mum in her village has done that at some point.

Excerpt from Saying Yes To Life (page 44)

SESSION 2: LET THE WATERS BE SEPARATED

VIDEO AND DISCUSSION: STACEY DOOLEY INVESTIGATES - 15 MINS

You will need: this video link www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOe_M3GutdY and a method of showing it.

1. Show the video and ask your young people to think of one thing that surprised them or made them think of something they might do differently.
2. Repeat one of the statistics from the video.
3. To grow the cotton for a cotton jacket takes 10,330 litres of water – the equivalent of 24 years of drinking water.
4. Invite your young people to get into groups and discuss two questions:
 - a) What surprised you in this video?
 - b) What do you think God's response is to this way of life?
5. Feedback to the whole group.



Draw out the reality of this situation. Our fashion industry is creating awful problems for our world, creation and people. As Stacey highlights, we are often aware of the terrible people impact: slavery, poor working conditions, children working. But how often do we also think about the impact on creation?

PRAYER: RESPONSE - 5 MINS

A youth worker in Nigeria wrote the following prayer. Perhaps you might want to read it and have a moment of silent reflection to think about the documentary and this prayer of hope. Read it for the group at the end of the reflection time.

A prayer on water from Nigeria:

Dear Lord, it is exciting to know that you are the very source of life including water. We praise and adore you for the gift of water that sustains all life and constantly reminds us that you are the fountain of living water.

Teach us to use it thankfully, to consume it consciously, and to protect its purity.

Father, forgive us for the times we took it for granted. We confess our attitudes of greed, dominance, and insensitivity towards your beautiful creation, and particularly towards water. Lord, forgive us for the times we have used water selfishly, unwisely, and without regard for how it affects others. Forgive us for the actions we have taken to harm the different sources of water around us.

Help us to see the effects of our actions not only on our immediate surroundings but also on people living in places plagued by drought. Help us to be conscious of our daily use of water; help us to be more willing to reflect on its symbolic nature and the lessons it teaches about you and your sustaining power.

Please guide us on how to protect the water bodies you made for your glory. Amen.

Prayer by Fwangmun Oscar Danladi. Oscar is a youth pastor at the ECWA Good News Church, Jos, and social activist at the Jos Green Centre, a centre for eco-entrepreneurship for young people.

Excerpt from Saying Yes to Life (page 44)

SESSION 2: LET THE WATERS BE SEPARATED

INPUT: SO WHAT? - 11 MINS

We have work to do in order to love creation as God does. Water is an example of this. It's not that we don't care – more often than not, we just don't know the impact of our lifestyle on creation and people living in poverty.

There is a better future available but it takes us all to make a difference. There are three things we can do:

LEARN: Check out We Are Tearfund's YouTube channel to find alternative ways to shop without causing strain on our water. This one might be a good one to start with: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDga1A0BftU> (Show video if you have time)

TAKE ACTION: Shop differently and shop less.

LIVE GENEROUSLY: You might want to think about supporting some of the projects helping communities worst affected by changes in water caused by climate change. Laura, one of the We Are Tearfund community, recently went to Uganda and learned how Tearfund partners are supporting the local community to grow crops differently, to adapt and lift themselves out of poverty. They were involved in the climate change resilience agricultural training, and learned all about how these communities are equipping one with safe drinking water infrastructures.

In Laura's words, 'This community really opened my eyes, not just to how vital this work is, but how complex the issues of climate change are across the world. Across the world, climate change is having unique and disastrous effects in terms of changing weather, and in Uganda, their problems start with water. Climate change has turned hours of light drizzle, perfect for farming, into short intense flash flooding. Simply, they have too much water too fast. The work being done with the Tearfund partners is enabling communities to build rainwater tanks, gravity flow systems with taps throughout the villages, and transform their landscapes into terraced farming structures to grow crops safely and efficiently. People in these communities now have safe drinking water, land stability, and ten times as many crops to grow throughout the year. This work is truly transforming lives.'

Many organisations are involved in supporting communities to adapt. Perhaps choose one and do a small fundraiser for them.

Invite one of the group to pray to close this session.

SESSION 3: LET THE LAND PRODUCE VEGETATION

SESSION OVERVIEW:

For the next hour, you and your group will explore the theme of land, both as part of the creation story, and the ongoing story of God throughout the Bible. We will think about small actions we can take to meaningfully bring restoration to our poor relationship with land.

YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, flip chart paper, prizes, all the recycling you can find, videos and slides downloaded and ready to show.

INTRO GAME: TALL TREES - 10 MINS

You will need: all the recycling bins from around the church, timer and a judge.

1. Get the group into teams.
2. Split the (clean) recycling into roughly equal amounts per team.
3. The teams have 5 minutes to make the tallest tree out of the recycling that they can. It must be able to stand independently for at least 10 seconds.
4. Extra points are awarded for 'most-tree-like structure'.
5. Judge decides the winner based on height, ability to stand and tree-likeness.

Return the 'trees' to the recycling bins.

SESSION 3: LET THE LAND PRODUCE VEGETATION

INPUT: THEME - 2 MINS

Our theme today is based on the next verse in Genesis 1:9-13

'And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.'

We'll be thinking about the importance of the Earth, land and trees we live with.

THEME ACTIVITY: THE FLOOR IS LAVA - 10 MINS

You will need: scrap paper and pens

1. Get the group into teams (according to the size of group and time allowance). Give paper and pens to each group.
2. The groups must start at one end of the room but the floor is lava, so they can only stand on paper. The first bit of paper for them to stand on is free.
3. They need to get their whole group to the other side of the room. To do this, they have to think of a passage/story in the Bible which talks about the land or trees. Yes, Google is allowed!
4. Winners are the team who cross the room first.

Feedback the passages and verses to the group to share learning about the huge amount of connection between land, trees and the story of God.

BIBLE DISCUSSION: FOCUSED EXPLORATION. - 10 MINS

You will need: each group to have access to a Bible

In small groups, share out these passages: Luke 23:44-45, Romans 8:19-22, Psalm 148.

Invite the group to answer the following questions:

- If you had to describe this passage in three words, what would they be?
- What does the passage tell you about who God is?
- What does the passage tell you about how the land responds to God?

Feedback thoughts to the group

In the feedback, you are looking to draw out themes of togetherness. We are not on a separate journey toward restoration with Jesus. The land worships, mourns and grieves.

SESSION 3: LET THE LAND PRODUCE VEGETATION

INPUT: TOGETHERNESS - 2 MINS

Ruth Valerio shows us so profoundly in her book, the link and connection between God and what he made on Day 3 of creation:

'The Lord of all creation, the one through whom all things were made (including trees), died for us, nailed to his creation, so that we who were once far off might be brought near through his blood, spilled onto the land, and the whole creation set free. Little wonder then that the natural world responds so dramatically at the moment of his death as darkness descends over the land and the earth shakes.' (Matthew 27:45, 51)

We have inherited a way of thinking about God and reading the Bible as though land, trees and people are completely separate. But when we read carefully, we notice how often land responds to God, how often trees are core to the teaching and habits of God's people.

Romans talks about creation, the land, waiting for restoration. Paul also talks about the rocks crying out in worship. Isaiah and Jeremiah are Old Testament prophets who plead with the Israelites to follow God properly. In their pleading, they talk about how people and land are withering as a result of human behaviour and lack of human worship of God. (Isaiah 24:4 and Jeremiah 4:28)

We are missing something of the heart of God when we forget his love for the land. We miss out on opportunities to worship him with our everyday lives when we neglect care for creation.

VIDEO: HAITI - 10 MINS

This video helps us think about the connection and calling of land, people and environment. Sometimes our actions are causing the land distress. Let's visit Haiti for a moment in this video.

- Please think about what it means for you.
- Get into groups and discuss what this video made you think or feel. Feedback to the group.

INPUT: SO WHAT? - 8 MINS

Our connection and collaboration with the land is not looking great at the moment. We use stuff and throw it away thinking it doesn't matter where it goes. But, the reality is that the land is groaning under the weight of our lifestyles. We must find a new way to treat the land. Recycling isn't the answer; we need a complete revolution.

There is a better future available but it takes us all to make a difference. There are three things we can do:

BELIEVE IN YOURSELVES: Some of you might think you're too young to make a difference. This is not true at all! The youth climate strikes are making a huge difference, the largest global mobilisation about climate was started by young people. This is an amazing achievement.

TAKE ACTION: Think before you buy and think before you throw away. We can reuse bottles, use flannels instead of face wipes, use bars of soap instead of bottles of soap. It sounds small and it sounds simple – but it makes a difference. More than that, every time you choose something that treats the land well, we join with creation in worshipping God. Check out [this video](#) for heaps more ideas.

SESSION 3: LET THE LAND PRODUCE VEGETATION

PRAYER: RESPONSE - 5 MINS

Let's think of one act of worship we want to commit to this week. One thing we can do to honour God's creation and love the global land he invites us to share. You might want to buy something reusable, you might choose to reuse something or think differently about your plastic use. Pick one thing and do it for seven days! You could even think about asking your church leaders to do something different in order to worship Jesus, for example, stop using disposable cups.

Watch this video to inspire us to prayer; praying that we would be courageous, community and learn from people who went before us. Link here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYyfFmLxy8Q>



PRAYER: A PRAYER FROM EL SALVADOR - 2 MINS

Invite someone to pray and close the session. There is an English translation below.

Oración por los árboles y la tierra

Dios de la creación nos has enseñado a amar la vida, a que de todos nuestros deseos debe superar el anhelo por la vida, deseo que debe trascender valorando todos los seres vivos de la creación. Los árboles y la tierra gimen a causa de nuestra poca conciencia por cuidarlos y protegerlos, nos hemos adueñado y lucrado lejos de protegerlos de la muerte. Hemos visto a la tierra como un recurso para explotar y no como madre. Aceptamos el desafío de cuidarnos a nosotros mismos para cuidar de nuestra madre y casa la tierra, de los árboles y de la vida. Reconocemos que nos has dado un entendimiento mayor al de otros seres vivos para reflejar tu carácter creativo, comunitario y amoroso con todo lo que existe. Señor, nos comprometemos a vivir cuidando de toda la naturaleza, protegiendo nuestro corazón de los deseos egoístas y viviendo no como dueños, sino como hermanos y en comunidad con todos los seres vivos y especialmente con los árboles que son fuente de vida.

Gerson Ramírez: Teólogo y miembro de la comunidad de jóvenes teólogos de Tearfund, colaborador en el movimiento Transforma Jóven de Honduras y miembro del movimiento Miqueas joven.

Prayer for trees and earth

God of creation you have taught us to love life, that of all our desires must overcome the desire for life, a desire that must transcend valuing all living beings of creation. The trees and the earth groan because of our little conscience to take care of them and protect them, we have taken over and profited far from protecting them from death. We have seen the earth as a resource to exploit and not as a mother. We accept the challenge of taking care of ourselves to take care of our mother and house the earth, trees and life. We recognise that you have given us a greater understanding than other living beings to reflect your creative, community and loving character with everything that exists. Lord, we commit ourselves to live taking care of all nature, protecting our hearts from selfish desires and living not as owners, but as brothers and in community with all living beings and especially with the trees that are the source of life.

Gérson J. Ramírez is a theologian and member of the Tearfund Young Theologians group, the Transforma Jóven (Transform Youth) movement of Youth in Honduras and Micah Youth.

SESSION 4: LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE SKY

SESSION OVERVIEW:

For the next hour, you and your group will explore the theme of the stars and skies. The wonder it raises in us about our amazing God, and the impact our lifestyles are having on the atmosphere and skies.

YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, flip chart paper, prizes, videos ready to show, a bar of chocolate, dice, hat, scarf, gloves, knife and fork

INTRO GAME: CHANGE CLOTHES CHOCOLATE - 10 MINS

You will need: a bar of chocolate, dice, hat, scarf, gloves, knife and fork

To introduce the idea of changes and sometimes change being forced upon us, we'll play this classic game.

1. Get everyone into a circle (for bigger groups, consider having multiple circles playing simultaneously).
2. Put the chocolate and all the clothes in the middle.
3. Pass the dice from person to person around the circle. If someone rolls a six, they can run to the middle, put all the clothes on and use the knife and fork to cut themselves a square of chocolate.
4. While this is going on, the dice continues around the circle until another six is rolled. This new person runs to the middle, interrupts the person, puts the clothes on and tries to get chocolate.
5. This continues for a while. Towards the end (to highlight the point that global change is happening at a faster, more dramatic pace now), add more numbers which trigger someone going into the middle. Let chaos ensue and share out the chocolate when the game is done.

SESSION 4: LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE SKY

INPUT: THEME - 2 MINS

Our theme today is based on the next verse in Genesis 1:14-19

'And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.'

We have already seen God create light on Day One, but now God is creating things that populate these spaces that have opened up – of sky, sea and land – and so here on.

Day Four, God creates the celestial objects to populate the sky and the 'spaces' of day and night.

BIBLE DISCUSSION: FOCUSED EXPLORATION - 10 MINS

You will need: each group to have access to a Bible.

In small groups, share out these passages: Genesis 1:14-19, Genesis 22:15-18, Psalm 147:1-5, Philippians 2:12-18

Invite the group to answer the following questions:

- If you had to describe this passage in three words, what would they be?
- What does the passage tell you about who God is?
- What does the passage tell you about how God thinks about us?

Feedback thoughts to the group

In the feedback, you are looking to draw out themes of how amazing it is that God made and named the stars. Just by speaking he made the cosmos, what an extraordinary God we have! Also, thinking about this same wonder and awe that he made the stars with, he attributes to us.

INPUT: THE SAME SKY - 1 MIN

When we think about our amazing God who flung stars into space and invites people to become like stars, sometimes we forget that we sit under the same sky as people all over the world. People who are invited to live like stars but who aren't given the same opportunities we are simply because of the part of the world, the bit of sky they live under.

SESSION 4: LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE SKY

VIDEO AND DISCUSSION: WHAT IS POVERTY - 10 MINS

Watch this video to see the real life of someone else under our sky but whose life looks markedly different to ours. Notice in the first part of the story, that she is forced to sleep under the stars, not for fun, but because she has so little.

In pairs, invite people to discuss:

- How did this story make you feel?
- How do you think it makes God feel?

Feedback to the group.

VIDEO: CLIMATE - THE FACTS - 2 MINS

We've thought about how the stars remind us that we are together under one sky – we are connected. We are getting our smart glasses out for the session today and delving into some of the science and opportunities this gives us to live out our love of Jesus. Watch the first 1 minute 40 seconds of this video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtW2rrLHs08>



INPUT: CHANGES - 3 MINS

Climate change isn't a new thing. The climate has been changing for milenia. But, originally it changed because of our position in the skies and among the stars (our orbital position around our star, the sun). Our God who spoke the stars into being in this verse, gave them position and orbit – he made us this way. But, in our recent history this has changed.

The climate is now changing, not because of our position among the stars, but because of our attitude toward the planet and its resources. Like the chocolate game earlier, though it was just a bit of fun, the reality for the planet is that this climate change is not good, it is resulting in irreversible damage and harm.

As the video explains, climate change is now escalating at a rate beyond that which the Earth can sustain. Our fossil fuel dependant lifestyles is ruining our planet and causing people living in poverty to suffer the most.

THEME ACTIVITY: AN ALTERNATIVE - 15 MINS

You will need: a rope, clothes pegs, pens and paper

1. String the rope from one side of the room to the other. (If your group is large, consider splitting into groups and having multiple ropes.)
2. Ask the group to think about everything they do in a day and ask them to write each separate thing on a piece of paper. Peg it to the rope. Yes, this will get a little silly. That's ok, but try to keep the group on track.
3. Read through the 'day-in-the-life' rope.
4. Read this quote by Martin Luther King Jr.:

'Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent upon most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed you by a Pacific Islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a French person. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning and that is poured into your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured into your cup by a Chinese person.

Or maybe you desire to have cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured into your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world.

This is the way our universe is structured. It is its interrelated quality.'

5. Input: Martin Luther King Jr. said this years ago, but how much more true is it today! In our 'day-in-the-life', we have relied on people all over the world who live under the same sky as us, but we don't know anything about them and we rarely know the environmental impact of that stuff getting to us.
6. Invite people to think of alternative ways of doing daily life that combats climate change. Write these ideas on the other side of the piece of paper, eg get a lift to school/car share or walk to school. Buy snacks and drinks at breaktime/use my reusable bottle, etc.
7. Read through the alternative 'day-in-the-life' and highlight that each time we make a decision to fight climate change, we join with God in looking at the stars and saying 'It is Good'.

SESSION 4: LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE SKY

INPUT: SO WHAT? - 3 MINS

There is a better future available but it takes us all to make a difference. There are two things we can do:

DO SOMETHING: The climate changing because of our position among the stars is fine. But the climate in crisis because of human behaviour, this must stop. Pick one thing from all the lists from the previous activity, put the piece of paper in your pocket and try to do it this week.

REMEMBER WE ARE ONE: We are one humanity, one creation, living under one sky. When we put up walls between us and others, or us and creation, we limit our worship of God. Watch this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5qig9HIJ7k> and use the prayer below to close the session.



PRAYER A PRAYER ON THE SUN, MOON AND STARS FROM THE PHILIPPINES - 2 MINS

Our heavenly Father, as we look up to you in the vastness of the skies,
The sun that you have made opens our eyes to a world lit in colour and clarity,
And the moon and the stars remind us of your faithfulness and steadfast presence,
Amidst the seasons of darkness and our community's sure moments of uncertainty.
Lord Jesus, you have shown us how from beginning to end was the light of love,
That as endless as the heavens above so is the grace that sustains all things,
So with faith that the Spirit has wrought in us, we sought the care every creature is to have,
As we dream, hope, and labor for a future wrapped in the fullness of joy that Your new creation brings.

Amen.

Rei Lemuel Crizaldo is an artist, a local author, and advocate of doing integral mission based in Manila, Philippines.

SESSION 5: LET THE WATERS TEAM WITH LIVING CREATURES AND LET BIRDS FLY

SESSION OVERVIEW:

For the next hour, you and your group will explore the theme of God's creation in our skies and oceans. We will marvel at the amazing beauty of the seas, and think about how we could better steward this space.

YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, flip chart paper, prizes, videos ready to show, quiz downloaded on sheets for everyone – or access to Facebook messenger, petition webpage ready for signatures.

We are going to start today's session slightly differently. By now, hopefully, you and your group are feeling inspired by how awesome God is, but challenged about the state of the world. Perhaps some are even feeling like it's just too overwhelming, the problems are too big and too numerous for us to do anything about it. Before that idea takes hold, we'd like to invite your group to take part in an activity to empower them to make a difference.

TOGETHER QUIZ - 10 MINS

You will need: the quiz downloaded onto sheets or access to Facebook messenger.

This is a fun, interactive quiz with one aim: to help you find out your unique way to pursue justice and make a difference in the world. It helps to spark conversation about how each of us have a role to play, and when we play that role alongside a global movement of changemakers – we can move mountains!

Follow the instructions on the website for how to use the quiz and help people find their persona.

SESSION 5: LET THE WATERS TEEM WITH LIVING CREATURES AND LET BIRDS FLY

TOGETHER DISCUSSION - 15 MINS

Invite your group to split up into all those with the same result and invite them to discuss:

- How do your strengths make you great at pursuing justice?
- Where will you need help from others?

Feedback answers to the room. As host, try to draw out that we will most effectively be part of a better future if we bring what we have, join with others and actually do something!

If there's time, split the group so that there are combinations of results in the group and invite them to think about: how would you mobilise your school to act on climate change?

Feedback answers to the room. As host, encourage where people have brought their strengths together. Also, perhaps you might want to equip the groups to actually do their ideas!

Now, on to the topic for today – it's a popular conversation, so have fun!

INPUT: THEME - 2 MINS

Our theme today is based on the next verses in Genesis 1:20-23

'And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning - the fifth day.'

As Ruth Valerio describes in her book:

'Finally the spaces are ready to be inhabited! There is light, atmosphere and water; land and vegetation; warmth, and a rhythm of day and night and seasons. Now the world can sustain animals, and the first to be created are the creatures to fill the waters and seas, and then the birds to fly in the air.'

Let's find out what this beauty looks like and how we can worship God through it.

VIDEO: BLUE PLANET - 5 MINS

Invite your group to watch this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLx4fVsYdTI> and share, in two words, what it made them think or feel.

What do you think of David Attenborough's final comment, 'Surely we have a responsibility to care for our blue planet. The future of humanity, or indeed all life on earth now depends on us.'



SESSION 5: LET THE WATERS TEAM WITH LIVING CREATURES AND LET BIRDS FLY

BIBLE DISCUSSION: FOCUSED EXPLORATION. - 10 MINS

You will need: each group to have access to a Bible.

In small groups, share out these passages: Genesis 1:20-23, Nehemiah 9:5b-8, Psalm 24:1-2

Invite the group to answer the following questions:

- If you had to describe this passage in three words, what would they be?
- What does the passage tell you about who God is?
- What does the passage tell you about how important the seas are to God?

Feedback thoughts to the group

In the feedback, you are looking to draw out themes of how the seas are so often used when trying to describe God's majesty. It is our nearest comparison to the awesomeness of God – and it doesn't even come close. God loves the seas and creatures in it. The creatures of the seas don't belong to us, they're God's.

INPUT: THE BLESSING ON 'LIVING CREATURES' - 3 MINS

Below is an extract from *Saying Yes To Life* where Ruth Valerio makes this observation: (you might want to paraphrase to make it accessible for the age of your group)

'God not only sees that it is good: for the first time in the text God pronounces a blessing; telling them to be fruitful, for the sea creatures to fill the seas and the birds to increase on the earth. The implication is that God has made the beginnings of the myriad of sea and sky creatures that we see today, and with his blessing he sets them off to multiply and fill the spaces he has created for them.'

It is good for us to note this because although we are familiar with God's blessing on Adam and Eve to be fruitful and fill the earth, we sometimes miss the fact that that God gives that blessing to all his creatures. It is also worth noting that the phrase, 'living creatures', in verse 20 is the same as that used of 'the adam' in Gen 2:7, where it says that God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and 'the man became a living being'. Sometimes people ask if other creatures have souls, and the Hebrew word for 'creatures' and 'being' is the same word: nephesh, which elsewhere is translated 'soul' but simply means 'being' or 'life' (eg. Deut. 6:5, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your nephesh and with all your strength', and Ps. 103:1, 'Praise the Lord my nephesh', and many other places).

So both Genesis 1:20 and 2:7 use the same word yet one is translated 'creatures' and the other 'being'. In fact the KJV is more blatant, translating 1:20 as 'the moving creature that hath life' and 2:7 as 'living soul'. (It is interesting to note too that the literal translation of Proverbs 12:10 is 'a righteous [person] has regard for the nephesh of his animal', which the NIV translates 'the righteous care for the needs of their animals' – what a bland translation!) The literal translation for both sea animals and human beings is 'living soul' or 'living being' and we must be careful not to ascribe something called a soul to humans but not to other creatures: biblically, everything that has the breath of God in it has – or indeed is – a soul.

SESSION 5: LET THE WATERS TEAM WITH LIVING CREATURES AND LET BIRDS FLY

INPUT: SO WHAT? - 7 MINS

There is a better future available but it takes us all to make a difference. There are two things we can do:

REDUCE YOUR PLASTIC: Let's just stop. We don't need to use as much plastic as we do. We can reuse, and we can get our parents and churches to do the same.

SIGN THE RUBBISH REVOLUTION PETITION: Let's get Coca-Cola, Unilever, Pepsico and Nestlé to take responsibility for their plastic waste. Fill in the form online and we'll add your voice to the petition:

<https://weare.tearfund.org/revolution/>

PRAYER: PRAYER FROM YOUNG PERSON IN VANUATU - 2 MINS

O Jesus,
be the canoe that holds me in the sea of life,
be the steer that keeps me straight,
be the outrigger that supports me in time of great temptation.

Let your Spirit be my sail that carries me through each day,
As I journey steadfastly on the long voyage of life.

Amen

SESSION 6: LET THE LAND PRODUCE LIVING CREATURES AND LET US MAKE HUMANKIND IN OUR IMAGE

SESSION OVERVIEW:

For the next hour, you and your group will explore the theme of priority in creation. Humankind alongside everything in creation; our calling and responsibility.

YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, flip chart paper, prizes, videos ready to show.

INPUT: THEME - 2 MINS

Read together Genesis 1:24-31

INTRO GAME: CHARADES- 10 MINS

You will need: folded paper with the names of animals written inside. Try to think of funny and ridiculous ones to make people laugh.

Round 1 – Standard charades. People take it in turns to take a paper and try to get the room to guess the animal without using words or noises. Acting only!

Round 2 – Make it harder. The person must choose someone else in the group and move them like a puppet to act out the animal on the card. (Idea stolen from the board game *Cranium*!)

SESSION 6: LET THE LAND PRODUCE LIVING CREATURES AND LET US MAKE HUMANKIND IN OUR IMAGE

BIBLE DISCUSSION: FOCUSED EXPLORATION - 10 MINS

You will need: each group to have access to a Bible.

In small groups, we will focus on one passage: Genesis 1:24-31

Invite the group to answer the following questions:

- If you had to describe this passage in three words, what would they be?
- What does the passage tell you about who God is?
- What do we learn about God's heart for animals?
- Why do you think God makes a distinction between 'good' and 'very good'?

Feedback thoughts to the group

In the feedback, you are looking to draw out themes of equality between all creation. The attribute 'very good' is often misinterpreted as a label for humankind only, distinct from the wider creation. But God says 'very good' over this entire creation completed. Read the chapter 'Made in the Image of God' starting at page 150 in *Saying Yes To Life* for more theological depth on this.

VIDEO AND DISCUSSION: MAN - 10 MINS

Invite your group to watch this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfGMYdalCIU>. And ask them to reflect on these questions. (The ending is just for humour, not a theological idea!)

- Does this feel like a fair representation of what we're doing to God's creation?
- Can you think of any examples?
- What do you think we can do about it?



SESSION 6: LET THE LAND PRODUCE LIVING CREATURES AND LET US MAKE HUMANKIND IN OUR IMAGE

INPUT: ARE WE HONOURING? - 3 MINS

Currently, around one in four mammals is at risk of extinction – a terrible statistic. In 2019 the then-IPBES Chair, Sir Robert Watson, said, 'Ecosystems, species, wild populations, local varieties and breeds of domesticated plants and animals are shrinking, deteriorating or vanishing. The essential, interconnected web of life on Earth is getting smaller and increasingly frayed.' What was clear from the report is that it is people who are both causing the problems and suffering the consequences, along with other species. From a human perspective, the failure to conserve and use the wider world sustainably is affecting our ability to meet 80 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals: those related to poverty, hunger, health, water, cities, climate, oceans and land."

Excerpt from Saying Yes To Life

For many years, the habits of humankind have not honoured God's creation. But we are designed to work together in harmony. The impact of this lack of stewardship of creation means that the whole of creation is suffering. Species are going extinct, the climate is in crisis and people are forced into poverty. We have work to do as followers of Jesus to join with him in turning this story around.

THEME ACTIVITY: 10 MINS

You will need: flip chart, paper and pens

The aim of this activity is to help us remember what it means that we are made in the image of God with clear and exciting purposes.

1. Get everyone into smaller groups around a piece of flip chart paper and pens.
2. Invite them to draw a stick person in the centre and put a title on the top left 'Image of God' and top right 'purposes of God'.
3. Ask the groups to write everything they can think of about what God says about us and our purpose here on Earth. (Google is allowed!)
4. Feedback thoughts to the group.

In the feedback, draw out the importance of believing God's truths over ourselves rather than the world's lies. Please also draw out the fact that the very first purposes for humankind were stewardship of the creation – this isn't a redundant calling because it was given so long ago; it is as relevant today as the day God originally gave it.

INPUT: SO WHAT? - 3 MINS

We must believe in ourselves, act with what opportunities we have available to us and be part of creating a better future. Watch this video <https://youtu.be/kF2R-tDqPag> and use the prayer below to finish our series saying YES to life!



PRAYER: PRAYER FROM YOUNG PERSON IN VANUATU - 2 MINS

A prayer from France

Lord, be praised for the immensity and the beauty of your creation.
I pray with humility to be every single day more aware of the variety of species on earth and to seek for their protection.
I thank you for this calling to take care of our planet that you put in many hearts, and I pray many others will follow.
I ask you the grace of being able to see the world with your eyes and to always be amazed by the places I'm blessed to go.
In this time of Lent, Lord, help me to discern what specific choice I can make to reduce my ecological imprint on the Earth and how I can be an encouragement to people around me to think and act about it.

At times when I can be discouraged by the amount of ecological issues, help me to remember I stand before holy ground when I encounter another person and to believe that you can make everything possible.

Amen

Prisca Liotard is a French Catholic with a heart for unity of Christians. She was part of the Community of St Anselm in 2017–2018 where her sisters and brothers gave her the "Environment" award.