

Letters for Creation

Homegroup resource

Session 1: What is climate justice and what does the Bible say about it?

Purpose:

Members of the homegroup will understand the difference between climate change and climate justice, understand what the Bible says about climate justice and how that applies to each of our daily lives, recognise that we all have a part to play, and are motivated to create their own letters for creation



Before you begin

It is important to acknowledge the uncomfortable truth at the heart of climate justice: that wealthy countries in the global north hold responsibility for driving climate change. In teaching about climate justice, it is fundamental to make clear that individuals are not to blame for climate change. Climate change is a result of how our society has developed over time and how it is currently structured. No one should be shamed for climate change, yet we should all recognise that we are all part of the system that has perpetuated this injustice. As part of this system, it is our shared responsibility—both as individuals and as communities—to use our voices and actions to leave the world a better place than we found it.

For some, discussions around environmental destruction and climate change can be extremely upsetting and anxiety-inducing. When planning your session, use these tips to limit anxiety:

- Avoid 'end of the world' and 'last chance' framing
- Be intentional and careful about the images and language that you use.
- Avoid 'save the world' messaging that places the burden for sorting out climate change on

individuals. For example, messaging like 'recycle more to save the world' is inaccurate and places the responsibility for fixing this problem on individual people.

- Be clear that world leaders have already committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions which are the main cause of humanmade climate change. Many countries, including the UK, have committed to a target for 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions within a few decades. ('Net zero' means 'overall zero'. It is not possible to totally eliminate all sources of emissions, although this should be the aim as far as possible, so some will need to be captured with new technology or offset with actions like tree planting.)
- Reassure participants that the urgent need for change isn't all negative. The future will be different, but reaching net zero doesn't mean losing everything that is currently unsustainable. Change means shaping a different world – one that is in balance with nature. New technologies will be created as priorities shift and systems are forced to change. As Christians, we are called to build the kingdom of God here on Earth. Part of this is living righteously



and seeking justice for people
and planet as we are all part of
creation.

Our hope is that those participating in the sessions will be able to envision what a more just world looks like and consider the actions needed to create it. Acting prophetically means addressing people in power, and each other, and calling for action. And it means challenging ourselves and our own communities to live out values of love, peace, dignity and justice.

This resource is designed as a 3-part series – a bible study, art facilitation, and art creation. If, however, capacity and resources are limited, the bible study can be used as a standalone session to explore what the bible teaches us about climate justice. It is also not essential to attend the first session to take part in the second and third.



Christian Aid is a key member of ACT Alliance. Eng and Wales charity no. 1105851 Scot charity no. SC039150 Company no. 5171525 Christian Aid Ireland: NI charity no. NIC101631 Company no. NI059154 and ROI charity no. 20014162 Company no. 426928. The Christian Aid name and logo are trademarks of Christian Aid. © Christian Aid June 2020 J121236

Bible Study - Introduction:

Welcome the group as you usually would – introduce the theme for the session: climate justice and our faith. To start the session, you may want to show this video on injustice – bit.ly/3E8iE1q - However, if timings are tight or you do not have the facilities to show a clip, below are the key points summarised.

What does the Bible say about justice?

In Genesis, humans are set apart from all other creatures as ‘being created in the image of God’ – all humans are equal before God and have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness, no matter who are you. However, the world doesn’t actually work like this. We are constantly redefining good and evil to our own advantage at the expense of others. After years of mistreatment and injustice, God chose Abraham to teach his family (and generations to come) righteousness and justice.

‘Righteousness’ comes from the Hebrew word ‘Tsedeka’ which is an ethical standard that refers to the right relationships between people, and treating others as the bearers of the image of God. The Bible often refers to ‘Tsedeka’:

- Proverbs 31:8-9 ‘Bring about just righteousness open your mouth for those who can’t speak for themselves’
- Jeremiah 22:3 – ‘thus says the Lord: bring about justice and righteousness. Rescue the disadvantaged, and don’t tolerate oppression or violence against the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow’

Justice and dignity are a big deal to God and yet, injustice has always been prevalent in society. Some people actively perpetrate injustice, others receive benefits or privileges from unjust social structures they take for granted. We all participate in injustice, actively or passively, even unintentionally. But despite this, God’s response to our injustice was to give us a gift, the life of Jesus, who offers His life to the guilty so that they too can be declared righteous before God. If God declared someone righteous when they didn’t deserve it, the only reasonable response is for us to go and seek righteousness and justice for others.



Prayer and reflection

The prayer below is a good way to open into some individual reflection time, or you are free to say your own prayer, or invite one of the participants ahead of time to prepare something.

“Creator God,
You made the world, and it is good.
The trees, mountains, rivers and seas.
The birds, lions, ants, and bees.
Creator God,
You made us to care for the world and for all people.
Our planet is hurting. Many people are hurting.
Help us to do what we can to bring healing to your creation and your people.”

Allow around 5 minutes for people to individually reflect on what climate justice means to them. How would they define it? Does it impact their lives? Do they have a role in bringing forth justice for others?

You may want to play Chris Tomlin’s song 'You have shown us' in the background.

At the end of the reflection time, ask a couple of people to share what they think climate justice is. Following that, you may want to share this definition of climate justice so that there is clarity for upcoming discussions:

“Climate justice goes beyond focusing on only the physical, social and cultural impacts of climate change. It recognises that those who have done the least to cause it, suffer the most. Climate justice focuses on working together with those most affected to create a fair future for all people and the planet, and seeking justice for those who do not have it.”

We recommend showing the following clip on racial and climate justice to unpack these themes further: bit.ly/38HL9ap



Discussion

Below are some scriptures that discuss the themes of love, justice and responsibility, along with some suggested questions for discussion.

Read Mark 12:28-34

“One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these. Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices”. When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.”

Context: Mark 12 is prefaced by a hostile interaction with authorities (priests and elders). The subsequent interactions between Jesus and the Priests, Pharisees and Elders are attempts to trap Jesus. The Priests, Pharisees and Elders were people of authority and power, and therefore Jesus’ response can be seen as a challenge to the systems of power and privilege at the time.

Questions for discussion:

- Is loving your neighbour connected to loving God? Why?
- What does loving your neighbour look like? Who is our neighbour?
- Going a bit deeper – compare Mark 12:28-34 with Matthew 22:34-40
 - Are there any differences? What are the implications of any differences?



Read Micah 6:8

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Context: In Micah chapter 6, God is reminding His people of how He has cared for them in the past. The prophet Micah is questioning how he can be restored to God and in verse 7, even suggests sacrificing his own child. He displays the desperation that God’s people feel to return to Him.

Questions for discussion:

- What do you think it means to ‘act justly, walk humbly and love mercy’?
- How can you use the talents God has given you to live out these three requirements?
- More specifically, how do you think these 3 points relate to climate justice, and how can we apply them in our lives to support those most affected by climate change?

Read Genesis 2:15

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it”

Context: Genesis chapter 2 focuses on the creation of the first man, the garden of Eden that God placed him in, and the work that He gave him to do.

Questions for discussion:

- What do you think God meant when He tasked Adam with taking care of the garden of Eden?
- Does that task still apply to our lives today? If so, what does it look like in the society we live in?
- Do you think God would be happy with how we have ‘taken care’ of the world in recent years? If not, what can we do to change that?



Once the discussions have come to an end, you may wish to close the session with the following points for reflection and prayer.

- What are 3 things each person is taking away from this session?
- How can you start to apply what you have discussed in this session into your day-to-day life in the next week?
- How can you share what you've learnt with those in your life that weren't present in this session?

God who is unchanging
God who is the creator of innovation
Place our feet on your foundations
Place in us your prophetic imagination
Place in us dissatisfaction at the sight of injustice
Place in us determination to seek change
Place in us your enduring hope
Place in us your unceasing love
Amen

