



Messy reflection

Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky. Let them rule over the tame animals, over all the earth and over all the small crawling animals on the earth.’

So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female. God blessed them and said, ‘Have many children and grow in number. Fill the earth and be its master. Rule over the fish in the sea and over the birds in the sky. Rule over every living thing that moves on the earth.’

God said, ‘Look, I have given you all the plants that have grain for seeds. And I have given you all the trees whose fruits have seeds in them. They will be food for you. I have given all the green plants to all the animals to eat. They will be food for every wild animal, every bird of the air and every small crawling animal.’ And it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and it was very good. Evening passed, and morning came.

This was the sixth day.

Genesis 1:26–31 (ICB)

The Lord God put the man in the garden of Eden to care for it and work it.

Genesis 2:15 (ICB)

‘The second most important command is this: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” These two commands are the most important commands.’

Mark 12:31 (ICB)

The creation story in Genesis is one of the world’s best-known stories, taking us through God creating the stars, the sky, the water and the land, the plants, the animals and of course, finally, us human beings. God spent time carefully creating a home that was perfect for sustaining life: he created a world we could thrive in. This perfect garden, Eden, was flowing with fresh water, teeming with life and buzzing with all creatures big and small. This world wasn’t just good: it was very good. We often forget, though, that God also instructed us to look after it.

However, we know that after sin entered the world, our relationships with God, each other and the wider world were broken. We can see that playing out today. When we see our oceans filled with plastic, forests being chopped down and the atmosphere filling with greenhouse gases, we know this is the outworking of sin. We also know that it is the most vulnerable people and creatures on the planet who are hardest hit by mismanaged waste and climate change, even though they have done least to cause it.

But the good news is that we can take seriously the responsibility God gave us to look after this world and our neighbours – to act with love towards our home. We can think about cleaning up our local communities through litter-picking and reducing the waste we produce. We can help our global neighbours, many of whom do not have safe waste collection, through supporting Tearfund’s Rubbish Appeal.

#discipleship: team

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

God wants us to live in harmony with him, each other and creation, and he gave us a responsibility to look after this wonderful creation which we call home. By (re)visiting the Genesis creation story through the lens of creation care, we can see how caring for creation is an act of worship to God, drawing us closer to him, and is a way to live out our discipleship and love our neighbours, wherever in the world they are.

Globally, two billion people do not have access to waste management. Supporting waste projects, like the ones Tearfund run, is a practical way we can show our love as we support communities around the world to safely dispose of their waste and protect the environment in their local communities.

Speaking up and calling for a global agreement on plastic pollution is another way we can clean up our world and care for creation. Together we can begin to make a difference and mend those broken relationships.



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#discipleship: families

Mealtime card

- Who thinks they take the bins out most often?
- How can we all be a bit greener?
- What's the most frequently found object in your rubbish bin?

Question to start and end the session

So... have you even thought about where your waste goes after you throw it away?

#discipleship: extra

Social action

Hold a local litter-pick fundraising event to raise money for Tearfund's Rubbish Appeal.

Activities

1. Waste penalty shoot-out prayers

You will need: a variety of waste to turn into a football (plastic sheets, old clothes and flexible materials are best); string to help tie the ball together; cones for goal posts (or alternatives to mark the goal)

Make a football and goal posts from waste, then have a penalty shoot-out prayer game. Set out goal posts and a penalty line. You may wish to move the line depending on the ages of people playing. Divide them into two equal teams. One person has to be the goalie and the rest line up to take penalties. Get the team to think of different things that are a bit rubbish that we want to say sorry to God about. As they step forward to take their goal, invite them to shout out their sorry prayer. 'Sorry God for...' You can then repeat with a 'Thank you for...' or a 'Please God...' prayer.



Tom Price - Ecce Opus/Tearfund

Talk about how around the world many children have to make-do with footballs made from waste. Some children have few new toys, and yet in countries like ours, we often buy too much stuff. Let's think about how we can be creative with the things we already own and the waste we produce, and still have fun! At the start of the Bible, God asks us to look after the world. How can we do this better?

2. Plastic bottles into mini greenhouses

You will need: old plastic bottles in a variety of sizes; scissors; soil, water and seeds to plant; paints and craft materials to decorate the bottles (optional)

Take old plastic bottles and transform them into mini greenhouses which are perfect for starting seedlings or growing small plants like herbs and microgreens (e.g. cress). Start by cutting off the base of the bottle to create a shallow pot with enough space to add soil and plant some seeds in it. About 1-2 inches deep is enough. Fill the bottle bottom with soil, lightly dampening it with water. Press in seeds suitable for the bottle size (e.g. cress or herbs). Pop the lids back on and leave them on a sunny windowsill. Then watch your plants grow! For an extra activity, encourage people to decorate their bottle, remembering to leave lots of gaps for the light to get through.



3. Tin cans into flowerpots or storage pots

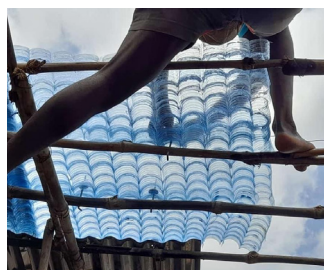
You will need: empty tin cans (look out for sharp edges before letting people do this activity); decorating crafts (paper, glue, paint, etc.)

Tin cans are great to reuse as plant pots, desk organisers or handy storage tins. This activity will get people creating a new item from waste, encouraging a circular economy. Depending on what craft items you have, set out each item and encourage people to get creative with their designs.

Talk about how would life be different without bins or recycling. What would you do with all your rubbish? What other items could you upcycle? In the Bible, Jesus was forever upcycling... he helped people turn around their lives into something even better, by connecting them with God. Look at the story of when Jesus met Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10.



Talk about how our creator God has made us creative! In Nigeria, one of Tearfund's partners in the city of Jos has been busy creating a youth centre using recycled plastic bottles. They have been cutting them into sheets to make a transparent roof and filling them with dirt to create eco-bricks for the walls.



Often, we don't think there is another use for our waste, but there are people being innovative with waste around the world. How can you be creative? If you were to make something out of recycled plastic bottles, what would you make? How could you reduce the amount of plastic your household uses?

4. Old T-shirt into a tote bag

You will need: old T-shirt; scissors

Cut the sleeves off the T-shirt. Cut the neckline area to make the 'head hole' bigger. Cut a 'fringe' along the bottom, cutting up from the hemline, with each strip being about 2 inches deep and 1 inch wide. Ideally, cut through front and back layers of the T-shirt together so your 'front' and 'back' strips are identical. Pairing strips together, one from the 'front' fringe with one from the 'back' fringe, tie each with a simple double knot. Work your way along the width of the T-shirt. After you have tied the fringes altogether you should have an open bag, with handles from the cut sleeves, and a closed bottom with fringe knots.

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Talk about how each year, 100 billion items of clothing are manufactured globally, with 30% of these textiles ending up in UK landfills. Why not talk about the ways you can reduce the amount of clothes you buy, and how you can repair and reuse old items like the T-shirt you've made into a tote bag? You can also take some time to discuss some of your favourite clothes and what they mean to you. Jesus challenged people not to worry about what to wear in his 'sermon on the mount' (Matthew 6:25–34). He said to put God's kingdom first and then we will have enough of what we need. What does putting God first look like when it comes to going shopping?

5. Tallest tower with paper and cardboard

You will need: lots of old paper, cardboard, newspaper and different types of recyclable paper-based materials; string, rope or plastic-free sticky tape

Split the group into teams, finding even numbers where possible (teams of three to five are best). Set a timer for 5–20 minutes depending on the age of the groups (younger kids might need a little longer) and begin a race to build the tallest freestanding tower made from recyclable paper. At the end, judge which is the tallest tower to be still standing, and feel free to comment on which design techniques worked well and which materials were the strongest.

Talk about the value in the resources we throw away. Talk about how paper is made. Paper and cardboard can be such useful materials even after we've 'finished with' them. What Bible stories do you know that involve a tower? In Genesis 11, you find the story of the tower of Babel.



The people wanted a tower so high that they could be like God and not need God. Think about your life, community and our world... where have we forgotten to live God's best way? What do we need to throw away and what do we need to rebuild? Ask God for ideas!

6. Speak up – write a group letter to the UK government

You will need: pens, felt-tip pens or coloured pencils to decorate the letter; a large version of the letter for everyone to sign

This activity will give children the chance to use their voice to influence policy-makers around plastic pollution. A good example to inspire them that speaking up can bring change is the story of sisters Ella and Caitlin McEwan who petitioned McDonald's and Burger King to stop giving away plastic toys with their kids' meals. Never think you're too small to make a difference!

You could have one big copy of the letter, which everyone can sign and decorate, or you can print out multiple copies. Or for those feeling more creative they could make a poster.

Simple suggested text for letters:

Dear UK government,

Our Messy Church has been learning about the plastic pollution crisis and the global plastics treaty. This treaty could help end the world's rubbish problem. With people around the world, I want the treaty to address plastic pollution by including:

- Reduction: Stop making so much rubbish
- Recycling: Recycle everyone's rubbish
- Respect: Help for people who collect rubbish
- Response: Make sure businesses and governments take action

Please don't throw away this opportunity!

Signed [use first names only and add your age if you would like to; use the church details for any response]

Please make sure your young people use the church address, not their own, and that they sign their first name only (not their surname).

Send your letters and posters to **Tearfund Rubbish Campaign, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE**, so that they can be handed to the secretary of state. Please include your contact details in a covering letter so Tearfund knows who to thank and can let you know what happens with the treaty.

Talk about how our world's rubbish problem is so big that we need the governments of the world to work together on it. Thankfully that is what could happen as around 150 governments are meeting to develop the first ever worldwide agreement on how we fix the plastic rubbish problem. This agreement is called the global plastics pollution treaty. But it's not a definite agreement yet.

Join Tearfund in asking our government to stop the rubbish by signing a letter, which will ask politicians to do all they can to make the global plastics treaty happen.

7. Eco-brick bowling

You will need: eco-brick (plastic bottle jammed full of plastic wrappers until it is as hard as a brick); two chairs

Eco-brick bowling is a fun team game which is always a firm favourite. Set up two teams in lines facing each other. Number each team player, creating 'pairs' across the two teams. If one team has an extra player, pick someone in the opposite team

to have two numbers. Set up the chairs at the end of the hall, about 10–20 metres apart, and place the eco-brick in the middle. Then begin the game, shouting out a number. When their number is called, a pair will run and sit on their team's chair. They then have to remove their shoes and throw them at the eco-brick trying to bowl it down. If they fail, they have to run to grab their shoe, then back to the chair for another go, until someone knocks the brick over. Keep a score and after a few rounds see which team is the winner.



Talk about what you could do with 2.5 tonnes of plastic waste (that's about the size of a rhinoceros)? Well, Tearfund partner, Eco Brixx, in Uganda have turned 87,500 plastic bottles into beautiful benches and picnic tables! What a great way to turn plastic pollution into infrastructure for local communities! How can you better care for God's creation by using less plastic?



8. Aluminium can targets

You will need: empty tin cans; shelf/ledge or high table; soft ball/s

Line up the empty tin cans and create a ‘target practice’ set-up. You can use plain cans or decorate them beforehand. Have each person take ten shots, throwing a small soft ball from five metres away. Keep a scoreboard and track who is in the lead. You may want to create different distance lines for different age groups.



Talk about how metal cans are some of the best materials for recycling as they can be recycled again and again and again. Think about what items you could buy in metal instead of plastic to save waste! Caring for God’s creation is part of our worship. What changes can your household make that will help you better care for our world?

9. Recycling relay

You will need: a mixture of waste (paper, cardboard, plastic tubs, tin cans, glass bottles and general waste wrappers); five boxes labelled ‘paper’, ‘plastic’, ‘glass’, ‘metal’ and ‘landfill’

Split into two groups and create a start line. Place all the waste at the start line (split evenly between the two groups) and then position the five boxes in a line about 10–20 metres away. The teams will be running relay shuttles taking one piece of waste at a time and sorting it into the correct box. When you shout GO, the first runners will start, and the relay continues until the first group finishes their waste pile. At the end, you can check each box to see if all the waste has been placed into the correct boxes.



Talk about how caring for God’s creation is part of worship. What changes can your household make that will help you care for our world? Tearfund partner, Eco Brixx, in Uganda is tackling the plastic pollution crisis by recycling waste into new products. Many communities in Uganda don’t have bin collection, so rubbish is left in the streets or is burned, filling the air with harmful fumes. Eco Brixx has created a recycling centre, which has recycled over 400 tonnes of plastic waste (that’s about 400 elephants’ worth) since 2017. They turn plastic bottles into fence posts, bricks, benches and photo frames, creating jobs for local people and a solution for waste. How could your household reduce plastic waste?

10. Crisp packet hearts

You will need: empty crisp packets (start collecting these in the weeks beforehand; it's a good idea to wipe them out and dry them first); paper clips; stapler; tape; safety pins (if you want to make badges); scissors; permanent marker pens

1. Take a clean, empty crisp packet and on a flat surface fold it horizontally twice to make a rectangle that is about a third the size of the original. We found it helpful to use paper clips to hold it in place before stapling.



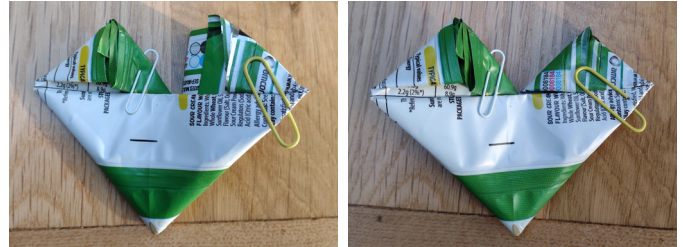
2. Fold this in half to find the midpoint as you are now going to fold the right side of the rectangle upward, aligning the bottom edge of the right side with the midpoint. Repeat on the other side.



3. Turn the heart over and fold the righthand corner over towards you. Repeat this on the other side.



4. Now fold the inner corners down to complete the heart shape.



5. Use three staples to hold everything in place and trim the sides with scissors to give a more rounded heart shape if you prefer.



6. Add your slogan. You'll need a waterproof permanent marker pen, and you might want to try writing on another crisp packet before committing your design to your badge.



7. Finally, add a safety pin on the back using a piece of tape if you want to turn your heart into a badge. Wear it with pride.



Talk about how around six billion packets of crisps are consumed each year in the UK: that's more than 16 million packets being thrown away every day. Currently in the UK, crisp packets cannot be added to our household recycling

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bins. Although the technology is there to recycle them, the process is considered too expensive. As a result, the vast majority of discarded packets have previously ended up in landfill. The plastic they are made from is so tough that they can last for many, many years.

Campaigners did not accept this situation and pressured the manufacturers to do something about it, resulting in a Walkers pledge to make sure that all their crisp packaging is recyclable, biodegradable or compostable by 2025. In the meantime, you can now take your crisp packets, along with other scrunchy plastics to many local supermarkets. Find your nearest [here](#).

Part of the reason so many crisp packets still end up in landfill is lack of awareness of these newer recycling options. This origami heart activity will help you educate those around you about the rubbish problem by making a rubbish heart, which you could wear as a badge.

When anyone asks about your heart badge, you can explain how they can recycle their crisp packets. If you are feeling really keen, you could make hearts and send them to people you would like to influence like your MP, local council or other leaders in your community.

Celebration

Play this video explaining the problem of plastic pollution and that a global plastic pollution treaty can be part of the solution – vimeo.com/791870301.

More information about Tearfund's Rubbish Campaign can be found on their website – tearfund.org/rubbish. You'll also find resources for churches including sermon notes, films and prayer resources.

Ask everyone what struck them from the video and today's Messy church activities.

God loves each and every one of us, and he loves this planet, his creation, which we call home. God wants us to live in a way which looks after this world and cares for our neighbours near and far. The video tells us all about the problems around waste and plastic pollution – that we're facing mountains of plastic pollution, dumped or burnt around the world and

people living in poverty are worst affected by this. But Jesus told his followers that even the smallest amount of faith can move mountains.

If we come together, we can tackle the plastic pollution crisis. We've heard today about projects working to clean up their communities, reduce and reuse plastic waste. And we've written to our government to ask them to be part of the solution with the global plastic pollution treaty.

Some of us might want to take more action, cleaning up our local areas and supporting sustainable projects around the world. Perhaps when you go home, you could think about what small gift you could bring to God to help support these projects across the world.

Prayer

Take some old newspapers and cut them into long strips to make a paper chain. Have each person connect some strips into loops and connect them together into a chain with other people. Once the entire chain of recycled newspaper is complete, each person takes hold of the chain creating a circle.

Lord God, fill this world with your love and wrap yourself around the whole of creation. We thank you for the world you have made for us, and we want to say sorry for the times we have not looked after it. Help us to see how we can live differently for you, to stop harming our beautiful planet and love our neighbours near and far.

Song suggestions

'He's got the whole world in his hands' – Maker Fun Factory Music Videos

'What a wonderful world' – Louis Armstrong

'God, you made them all (colours song)' – Geoff and Jo Burr

'Lighting up the world' – iSingPop

Meal suggestion

Food waste feast! Think about using scraps in your kitchen to make a meal from food which might otherwise be wasted.