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IN THE BEGINNING

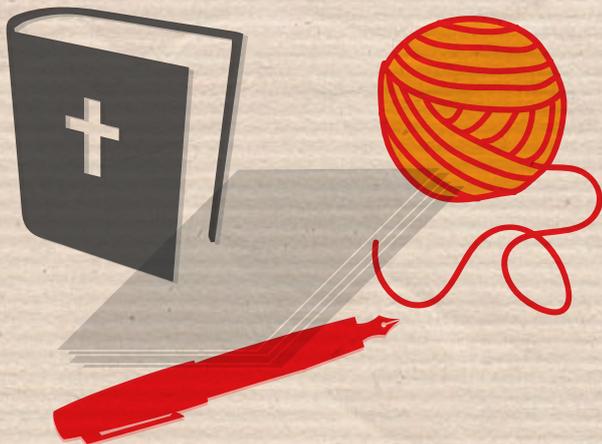
From the very beginning, God sets out his vision for the world: a vision of good relationships between people, the world and God.

WHAT DOES GOD'S IDEAL WORLD LOOK LIKE? HOW CAN WE GET BACK TO LIVING IN COMMUNITY WITH EACH OTHER IN THE WAY GOD INTENDED?



YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, paper, pens, coloured wool for plaiting



GET STARTED: Living in relationship

Together, read Genesis 1 to 2.

What is it that strikes you about the passage? Every time God creates something new, we hear that it is good.

What is the only thing that God says is not good? (*That man should live alone.*)

In 1:26, God uses the plural 'us' when talking about creating humankind in God's image. From the very beginning, God is a God of community – and, being created in God's image, we are designed to live together.

This is what God intends for the world: for us to live well in God's image, in harmony with God's world, with each other and with God. Almost straight away in Genesis, Adam and Eve get it wrong – and that happens again and again. We get caught up in ourselves and become selfish, but God keeps coming back to remind us of that vision of living well together.

We are called to mend broken relationships: to restore compassion and equality between people; to ensure our relationship with the earth reflects that of God, and to step back in line with God's plan.



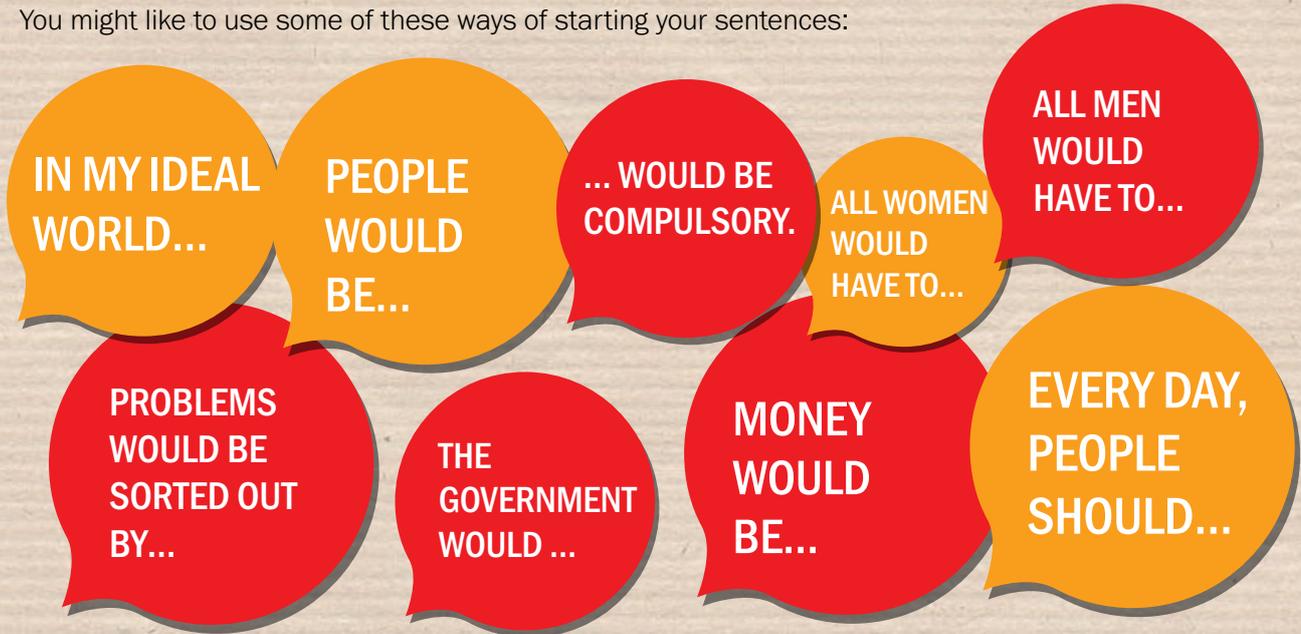
ACTIVITY: Ideal world 'consequences'

Today our world is broken and doesn't look like the world God first created. What is your vision for a good world?

Depending on the size of the group, give a piece of paper to everyone or to just a few.

Think about what your ideal world looks like. Write it down in a sentence and fold your paper so that it can't be read. Pass the paper to the left, so that the person next to you can continue with another sentence. And then pass it on again, until the paper comes back to you.

You might like to use some of these ways of starting your sentences:



When everyone has their own sheet of paper again, unfold them and read out some of your collectively created visions for an ideal world.



DISCUSS:

- In Genesis, God creates more than one person because he sees that it is 'not good that man should be alone'. What does it mean to exist in community rather than as individuals?
- Can you think of any examples of broken relationships between people or communities? What are the results of this brokenness?



ACTIVITY: Connections

Start a spider diagram and put yourself in the middle. Add in all the connections you have and relationships you are in. Once you have exhausted the obvious options, look in the labels of your clothes and think about the people who made them, or the people who grew the food you have eaten today.

Look at your sheet and think about all the relationships we maintain. Think about how our actions might have repercussions for the people we have noted down, and possibly many more we haven't yet thought about.



DISCUSS:

- Think about the relationships you have on your spider diagram. Are they all positive? Think and talk about whether, and how, we could make them better.



PLEDGE:

Promise to do something that makes these relationships better. This could be choosing to buy things that have a positive impact on the people that make them; it could be taking a friend for coffee or taking time to sit down with your family.



PRAY:

Give everyone three strands of coloured wool or thread to create a prayer plait.

The first thread represents our relationship with God, the second with each other and the third our relationship with the planet.

As they start to plait the threads, encourage people to pray, either quietly or out loud. When finished, the plaits can be worn around the wrist or, if people have their own Bibles, placed in Genesis as a prayer bookmark.

Use the prayer plait as a reminder that God created us in relationship, and wants us to live well together.

Finish by reminding everyone that we are all created in God's image.

Each one of us is special and of infinite worth in God's eyes.

When we live in community, as God intended, the needs of others matter to us.

Don't forget that more sessions from this series and other great resources are available from christianaidcollective.org