

Bible Study



Young pastoralist leads his family's sheep and goats in search of pasture in drought-affected Hamer District. South omo Zone, Ethiopia. Climate change is disrupting rainfall patterns leading to longer droughts and worse floods.

Leader's Notes

This resource is designed to help your small group reflect on the theme of loss and damage (making restitution) in scripture and to make connections with climate related loss and damage. It includes:

- Brief notes on two Bible passages: Exodus 22:1-7 and Luke 19:1-10 –to help you prepare to lead the session.
- Prayers to open and close your session
- Links to the testimony of Ineza Umuhiza Grace, a Rwandan activist who is on the frontline of the climate crisis.
- Questions to help your group make connections between scripture and climate justice.
- Suggestions to help your group think about what actions they can take.

What you will need

Copies of the study - page 2 & 3 of this document
Bibles or print outs of the bible passages
The means to play the 2min video of Ineza 's testimony or a copy of the transcript - both available here: caid.org.uk/l&d/videos
Drinks and biscuits are optional – but recommended!

Notes on the Readings

Exodus 22:1-7 is a short list of laws setting out the kinds of repayment that were expected under Old Testament Law for different offences. It is notable that the list includes offences that were committed intentionally, like theft, and some that were unintentional, like allowing a fire to get out of control. The level of restitution seems to vary depending on the intent of the person who caused the damage, but making good the loss is required in every case.

Luke 19:1-10 tells the story of the tax collector Zacchaeus. Under Roman rule the tax burden was high and many poor people were forced to sell their family lands to wealthy landowners in order to make ends meet. Tax collectors were a hated part of this unjust system. It is no surprise that the crowds began to mutter when Jesus' chose to eat dinner at Zacchaeus' house. But meeting with Jesus transformed Zacchaeus. This passage is a wonderful example of God's power to change hearts and minds but it also reminds us that the transformation that happens when we begin to follow Jesus should lead to action.



Villagers make their way through the flooding and destruction caused by Hurricane Iota in the village of Panzós, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala.

The Bible Study

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
Please send your Spirit
To open our minds to your Word
And our hearts to one another
Grant us a vision of your justice
Show us how we must respond
And give us the courage to walk that path
Amen.

Loss and Damage in the Bible

In the Bible justice is grounded in relationship. A righteous person is one who is in right relationship with God and their neighbours, especially the most marginalized groups in society, the widow, the fatherless, the foreigner and the poor. When someone's actions cause harm to others Biblical justice seeks to repair damage and make good loss and so to restore peace and order to the community.

The cross of Jesus is at the heart of this understanding of justice: God takes on our humanity in order to pay our debts and restore the damage caused by our sin. Jesus' death and resurrection restore our relationship with God and mark the beginning of the renewal of creation.

This Bible study looks at two passages that help us to reflect further on what this idea of making restitution might mean in the light of climate injustice.

Readings

Read Exodus 22:1-7 pause for a few moments and then read Luke 19:1-10

Why do you think the amount of restitution to be paid was different for different offences?

What impact do you think Zacchaeus paying back the money he had swindled would have had in his community?

Making Connections with Climate Loss and Damage

Climate change is driving disruption in rainfall patterns and making extreme weather events like heatwaves, hurricanes and floods much more intense. Whilst climate change affects all of us, by far the greatest impacts are being felt in the world's least developed countries.

This is unjust: Rich nations and big corporations have emitted the lion's share of all the greenhouse gas pollution in the atmosphere, but the poorest countries stand to pay the highest price for it. Less than 4% of all the carbon dioxide pumped into the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution has come from the African continent. Yet polluters continue to burn fossil fuels, to profit from the poison they produce, and turn their backs on the damage already done.

Ineza Umuhoza Grace speaks powerfully about the loss and damage experienced by her country, Rwanda, listen to her testimony. [Watch the video/read the transcript]

Thinking about Ineza's testimony, what do you think is needed to restore the loss and damage her country is facing because of climate change?

Zacchaeus obeyed the Law by making restitution to those he had wronged and went over and above its requirements by giving away half of his possessions to the poor. Do you think this has implications for what we should require from polluters and how we respond as people of faith?

What role can the church play in repairing the loss and the damage of the climate crisis?

Rise Up and Act

Thinking about the conversation you have just had – what actions can you take to promote the loss and damage agenda in your church, in your community and in the nation?

Take one practical action from your discussion that you could do as a church and one for yourself – agree to support and pray for one another in taking action and to report back at a future meeting.

After the meeting you could spend some time exploring loss and damage around the world in news articles about climate disasters or read stories on Christian Aid's website caid.org/riseuppayupstories

If you want to engage the rest of your church with this issue, use our Rise Up Pay Up activity pack: caid.org.uk/riseuppayuppack

Closing Prayer

Mighty God,
We thank you for meeting with us
Through your word and through each other
We confess that we are daunted by the task before us
But your word burns like a fire in our hearts
It drives us to speak and to act for justice
Send us out now Lord in your mighty power
To live and work to your praise and glory
Till justice rolls on like a river
And righteousness like a never-failing stream.
Amen.

