



Kahrite Gelebo and her family are making the most of time the saving and profit making cookstove cooperative in Khrat, Ethiopia

Mending our relationships

People and planet restored together.

This bible study is one of a series of four, designed to help your small group put your faith into action.

The focus of this session is on the goodness of the world that God has given us and how we can begin to restore our relationships with our neighbours and the natural world. It will help you think about what actions you can take to do so.

It includes:

- Brief notes on two Bible passages: Genesis 1:1-31 and Romans 8:18-21
- Prayers to open and close your session
- [A Faith in Action video](#) featuring Geoff Holder
- Questions to help your group put their faith into action
- Suggestions to help your group think about their next steps

NOTE: We advise downloading the suggested resources in advance to show the group



Notes on the Readings

The creation story in Genesis 1 establishes important themes that run throughout scripture: God is the Creator of heaven and earth; creation is good and valued by God. Human beings are a part of creation, not distinct from or above it, but have a special role – they are entrusted with “ruling over” other creatures.

Tragically, this verse has been used as a justification for the exploitation of the natural world. This is to badly misunderstand the passage: Women and men are made in the image of God, as such we are called to share in the Creator’s own “rule” over creation, that is, in the work of sustaining and caring for the world that God has declared to be “very good.” In the New Testament Jesus explains that godly rule totally subverts worldly ideas of dominion [Matt 20:24-28], to “rule” is recast in terms of love and service. Understood in this light, our special place in creation is to have the honour and responsibility to act as stewards taking care of the wonderful world that God has made.

Romans 8:14-21 is a wonderful statement of God’s intention for all of creation. It reminds us that God does not plan to rescue people out of the world but to renew and restore all things. It is a reaffirmation of the purposes of Genesis 1: It tells us that through Jesus, God’s creative intention will be fully realised. Jesus’ resurrection on the first day of the week marks the beginning of the new creation. Christians belong to the new creation, and the day is coming when all creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and renewed

human beings will enjoy right relationships with each other, with God and with the created order.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
Please teach us by your word
and empower us by your Spirit.
Make us more like Jesus,
That our mouths may speak his truth
and our deeds accomplish his will.
Make us agents of your kingdom,
which is growing now amongst us
and will one day come in glory
and with great power.
Amen.

Introduction

Human actions are having a devastating impact on the natural world. Species are being lost to extinction, precious natural environments like rainforests are in danger of being lost forever and the climate crisis, driven by burning fossil fuels is leading to rising temperatures, longer droughts, and more frequent storms and floods.

The climate crisis affects us all but by far the greatest impacts are being felt by the poorest communities around the world’s least developed countries. This is deeply unjust: Rich nations and big corporations have emitted the lion’s share of all the greenhouse gas pollution in the atmosphere, but the poorest communities pay the highest price. Something has gone very wrong with our relationships to the natural world and to our human neighbours. Our readings today help us to think about our relationships with God, the world and each other.



Reading

Read Genesis 1:1-31 then pause for a few moments and then discuss the questions:

- Based on this passage, how would you describe God's relationship to creation?
- What do you think it means to be made in the image of God?
- Verse 28 could be seen as a license to exploit the natural world. How do you think that perspective changes when we consider that we are made in God's image and "rule" creation as his representatives?
- Jesus challenged his disciples about their ideas of rule and leadership, he pointed to his own example as the world's true ruler who had come to serve and give his life for others [Matt 20:24-28] How do you think this should shape our relationships with creation and our neighbours?

Making connections

Read Romans 8:18-21 pause for a moment and then watch Geoff Holder's Faith in Action video. In Romans 8 Paul envisages creation, liberated from its bondage to decay, sharing in the freedom of the children of God. It is a vision of God's creative intent in Genesis 1 being fully realised as a result of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It reminds us that our relationships to God, the world and our fellow human beings are bound up together.

Geoff's work with tree planting in Uganda is a wonderful example of faith

in action. He is helping to restore creation and protect vulnerable people from the impacts of climate change.

- Take a moment to consider Paul's vision of a liberated creation – how do you think it will be different from the world we see around us?
- Can you think of some ways that you and your church can put your faith into action to care for creation better?
- What actions would you like to see governments and large corporations take to reduce the impact of climate change on the world's poorest people? And what part can your church play in making them happen?

Next Steps

Geoff's video shows the close connection between caring for the natural world and loving our neighbour. Christian Aid's work shows the same connection. Work such as...

- Our partner [SOSURE in Malawi](#) works with communities to plant vegetable gardens and fruit trees to provide extra food and income and reduce soil erosion.
- In Ethiopia our partner [Women Empowerment Action](#) provide efficient cook stoves use less firewood than traditional methods of cooking, which reduces deforestation and saves the women from having to walk long distances to find firewood.
- [Campaigning for changes](#) in laws and policies that help reduce carbon emissions and ensure that



communities most impacted by the climate crisis are supported.

You could also think of actions that you and your church could take to take care of the world that God has entrusted to our care. Maybe you could sign up to A Rocha's Eco Church scheme?

And you can discover ways to raise your voice and stand alongside facing loss and damage because of the climate crisis by downloading our [climate justice church activity pack](#). Take a few moments to pray for one another and for the actions that you have decided to take following this study, then have someone say the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, we thank you for the beautiful world that you have made, and the great love that you have shown us.

We ask you to forgive us for turning our backs on you,
Forgive us for the harm we have done to your world,

Forgive us for our failure to love our neighbours.

But we thank you that you have promised a better day

A day when creation will share in the freedom of God's children.

We thank you for the glimpse of that day that we see in Geoff Holder's work
Please show us how to put our faith into action

Grant us the courage to stand for mercy, love and justice

That we might begin to glimpse what it means for your kingdom to come and your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.

We love hearing how our supporters are putting their faith into action.

If you have a story you would like to share, please email us at campaigns@christian-aid.org or give us a call on 01925 573 769

