

YOUTH RESOURCES

15-18



SESSION 1

LAND

ECO  **CHURCH**
AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT



ALLCHURCHES TRUST LIMITED®
OWNERS OF ECCLESIASTICAL INSURANCE GROUP

www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk



LAND – SESSION 1



INTRO

When was the last time you thought about land? Probably not very recently – especially if you live in an urban context. We don't tend to think about it that much on the whole, but it is intrinsically linked to our everyday lives. As the human race we build on land, work on it, play on it, grow our food from it, use it for our medicines, toiletries and even our clothes! We drill into it for fossil fuels, we dig into it to bury rubbish, we pump water out of it. We also enjoy it; – spending time in nature, marvelling at all the different plants and creatures that it sustains. We are constantly interacting with the land in all kinds of ways.

Today we're going to spend time looking at the very beginning, how God created everything and how he intended us to interact with it. We'll have some honest conversations with each other and God, and commit to caring for the land off the back of our conversations.



GAME

During this session we'll read the Bible's account of creation. So begin with a creation-themed game! You might have an idea yourself, but if not here are 2 fun ideas you could use from this list: <https://www.signupgenius.com/church/youth-group-games.cfm>

Serpent and Snake – an adaptation of wink murder, you can find the instructions at number 8 in the list.

Clay Chaos – you could use clay or play dough for this and use it as an image in the Bible study later on for how we interact with God's creation. You can find the instructions at number 14 in the list.



BIBLE

Read Genesis 1–2:3 together

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1–2%3A3&version=NCV>

You might know this bit of the Bible really well from Sunday school or RE lessons – but let's revisit it together now asking God to give us a fresh perspective to see all he created and how he intended it to be from the start. This beautiful poetic account of how everything came to be has loads to teach us!

- What stands out to you from this passage? Any thoughts, favourite bits or questions? Talk about these together.
- What are some of your favourite things about creation? What makes you go 'WOW!'?
- What does God think about his creation all the way along? (v10, 12, 18, 21, 25) what about once humans are created? (v31)
- Once we were created God considered creation complete – us along with all he had created was VERY GOOD! Do you tend to think of yourself as 'very good'? When, why/why not?
- Do you tend to think of others as 'very good'? When, why/why not?
- Or good? Or average? God thinks creation with you and others in it is very good.
- V26 says God created humans in his image and likeness – what do you think this means?
- If you viewed other people as being made in the image of God every day, how would that affect how you treat them?

Read Gen 1:28b and Gen 2:15:

- What job did God give humans to do?
- If this was part of our original purpose – what good examples do you see today of people ruling the earth, taking care of it and working the land?
- In what ways do you see people misusing this power?

Read Gen 2:1–3 again, and read Exodus 20:8–11 – On the seventh day God rested – he doesn't need rest, he was teaching us a way of being by building rest into creation, as well as work.

- Why is it good for us to rest after working?
- God tells his people to prioritise this as part of their society. How easy or hard do you find it to have a rhythm of work and rest in your week? Discuss together how you find this and help each other out if you need support on it

Read Leviticus 25:2–7:

- Why is it good for the land itself to rest too?
- In what ways does our society not let the land, or the environment, as a whole rest?



BIBLE

Genesis Continued

Youth leader note: if you want to, read Gen 3 together and discuss using the questions below. If you're short on time however, you can give a summary.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+3&version=NCV>

We've looked together at how God intended things to be, but we know they didn't stay this way. There was no death or sin in the world at the beginning, and God gave the man and woman an abundance of trees to eat from in the garden, warning them there was only one they weren't to eat from (Gen 2:16–17). Sadly, humans decided to go their own way. They believed a lie the snake told them that God was holding out on them, and stole from the one tree they were told never to eat from – and so sin and death came into the world. This had all kinds of impacts:

- Read Gen 2:19–20a and v25, and Gen 3:9–11 – because they had sinned, going their own way and not God's – how did humans' relationship with God change? What was it like before and after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- Read Genesis 2:22–25 and Gen 3:11–13 – how did the man and woman's relationship with each other change?
- Read Gen 2:8–9 and v15, and Gen 3:17–19 and v23 – how did people's relationship with the land change?
- In what ways do you see these things play out in today's world?

At this point humans' relationship with God, one another and creation was broken. We know this is not the end of the story – that Jesus has died for all our sin and is reconciling all things to himself – we'll look at this together in our next session. But first, the Bible teaches us it's important to take time to lament – to acknowledge the brokenness in the world and in ourselves, to say sorry to God and cry out to him for help.



ACTIVITY

Lament

Our actions have an impact on God's creation that he's called us to take care of, and on others who are made in his image. Take some time now to say sorry to God for what you know you've done wrong towards the earth and other people, and to be honest with him about how you feel about all of this stuff.

Equipment:

- Cross
- Post-it notes
- Pens

Set up:

Set up an area where the cross is clearly the focal point. You might have a large cross used in church, or a small model of it – place this somewhere the young people bring their post-it prayers to. If you need to you could instead print a picture of the cross or project it onto a wall.

Dim lights and put some worship music on quietly in the background.

Youth Leader note: Make sure each young person has access to a pen and post-it notes or paper. Give them time to sit quietly with God and write their honest prayers – saying sorry and lamenting the damage to creation. Invite the youth to stick their lament prayers on the cross, or lay them at the foot, symbolising bringing their honest lament to Jesus, knowing his forgiveness and reconciliation through the cross.

*'Then I confessed my sins to you
and didn't hide my guilt.
I said, "I will confess my sins to the Lord,"
and you forgave my guilt.'*

Psalm 32:5 (NCV)

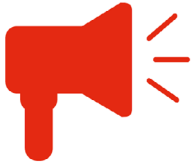


EXTRA RESOURCES – LAMENT

Youth Leader note: You may find these resources collated by Engage Worship helpful if you find you need to further support young people in lamenting and coping with the grief of Climate Change.

<https://3ak4be4522es3y5i4l2cwfkx-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Climate-Lament-Handout.pdf>





ACTION

In our Bible study we looked at the rhythm of work and also Sabbath rest that God wants us and the land to have. Our society and food industry tend not to have a rhythm of Sabbath or seasons. You can buy almost anything at any time of the day from all around the world – from avocados to shoes to cosmetics. This means that people and the land are often made to work beyond their natural limits.

We can be different – in the way that we live our own lives and what we ask of others and nature. We can follow God's lead living in his rhythm of work and rest – bringing life and restoration to us and to the world around us.

Take some time now together to discuss how you could commit to one of the following ideas or one of your own, prioritising Sabbath rest for the earth and other people. Share with your group what your commitment is and talk about how it's going in your next session together to encourage each other to keep going!

- **Commit to not buying anything on Sundays:** set this day aside to rest and worship God, to be grateful for what you already have and not to buy more. This restores you and steps out of our 24/7 economy for a day each week (you could designate another day if it works better)
- **Go seasonal:** it only takes a quick web search to read up on which veg is seasonal at different times of year in the UK. When we grow veg out of season or ship it from overseas we contribute to carbon emissions, and push the earth and people beyond their natural limits. Perhaps commit to either:
 - Cook a seasonal meal for your family this week – or once every month if you're up for it!
 - Commit to getting seasonal fruit and veg from the UK as much as possible
- **Buy small & local:** what is something you normally buy online you could get locally from a small business instead? This saves on carbon emissions and invests in your local businesses, rather than the global 24/7 economy.





GOING DEEPER

If you want to explore further the theme of Sabbath in the Old Testament and how it is linked to us and all of creation check out this Bible Project video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFTLvKB3JLM> (5.26 mins) You could include this in your session and take time to discuss:

- What difference would it make to our world if we all had a day of Sabbath every week, and a year of Jubilee every 50 years? What would the impact be on the earth, plants, animals and on people?
- As followers of Jesus, how can we be counter-cultural and celebrate a Sabbath? One day a week to unplug from our work and devices and recharge ourselves, reconnecting with nature and God