

WASTE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO THROW SOMETHING AWAY?



#SLASHtheTRASH: THREE WEEK BIBLE STUDY

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This three-week bible study packet includes activities, discussions, bible studies, videos, and stories to help understand god's plan for creation, and our place in it.

The bible study is most effective in its original order, but it is designed so you may also pick the most relevant sessions for your group.

The issue of waste is huge and our throwaway culture is so ingrained that it seems impossible to change. We encourage your group to start making changes in the way you dispose of stuff.

Take action together to reduce your waste—you can start with our #slashtetrash challenge. If we all make changes together in our own lives, we will begin to see a bigger shift among our peers, our town and our generation. #slashtetrash challenge details are found in week 2 and 3. Contest details can be found on our page tearfund.ca/slashtetrash. Enjoy!

WEEK ONE

DISCUSS: TRUE WASTE

Have you ever reflected on how much you throw away in a single day?

Read these statistics aloud. Ask your group to guess how many of these facts are true represented on the amount of fingers they hold up.

Statistics:

1. If our food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind the US and China.
2. Since 2000, Canadians have produced more waste per person than Americans.
3. The average Canadian wastes almost twice as much as someone in Japan
4. Canadians produce 3.25 million tonnes of plastic waste each year
5. There are one billion people underfed, two billion overfed and we waste a third of all food produced.
6. Around 23,000 tonnes of toothbrushes are sent to landfill every year in America.

(*Scale: A blue whale, space shuttle, commercial airplane can all weigh 100 tons!)

All of these facts are...TRUE!

Questions:

1. Which statistic surprised you the most?
2. Are there any statistics that you have heard before?
3. How does this information make you feel when you think about how we are living on this earth?
4. Would you change anything about your lifestyle?

Conclusion: This isn't something to feel guilty about. It's almost impossible to not throw something away. But we are all in this together, and once we begin to understand the scale of the issue, we're in a better position to take action in our own lives. Then we can begin to change the culture around us and to take the consequences of waste seriously.

VIDEO: 'TRASHED' TRAILER

Our trash problem isn't just about too much litter in Canada. Plastic pollution is one of the largest sources of garbage that is damaging the whole world around us.

Ask: What are some of the effects of this plastic pollution problem?

Then watch this video clip...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z2s_klZkFg

While you watch the video, write down on sticky notes everything you hear about why plastic pollution is such a big problem.

From watching this short clip, we can see that our plastic problem is having a big impact all around the world.

- How do you feel after watching the video?
- Did you know this already? Or has it shocked you?
- What did you write down for the question 'Why is plastic pollution such a big problem?'

Things they could have written down from the video clip:

- More trash than life in the deep ocean
- We don't think of consequences when we throw things away
- It doesn't break down
- We have microplastics in our drinking water and in us
- It makes people in poverty sick

(Take an extra step. Watch the entire Trashed documentary with your youth group to more fully grasp the impacts of our garbage on the world)

BIBLE STUDY: IN THE BEGINNING...

God created everything in perfect harmony and order, to provide everything we could possibly need...

- Read Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 2:7-17

Questions:

1. In what ways does God create the universe to function in perfect order?
2. How did God view His creation?
3. How does God show his affections and provide for Adam?

... He showed Adam and the Israelites that taking more than what is needed is not the way God had intended.

- Read Exodus 16:1-20

Questions:

1. How does God show His providence to the Israelites?
2. What does God command the Israelites?
3. In what ways in our lives do we sometimes act like the Israelites (in our greed, disobedience, and distrust in God's providence)?

Conclusion:

In Genesis 1 we see God design and create everything in this world. At the end of each day he says it is 'good' – the plants, the animals, the people and everything he's made. In this passage, and all the way through the Bible, we see God cares for creation and his people, and knows exactly just what is needed to sustain us.

In Exodus 16, the Israelites had to learn to follow God's commandment to only take what they needed, and to trust God to provide them with only exactly what they needed. Just enough. Part of the reason why we end up with so much waste in our culture is because we buy way more than we actually need-- more clothes than we can wear, more gadgets than we can use, and our houses are fit to burst with stuff.

Our culture of consumerism has big consequences, one of which is a huge problem with waste. Romans 8 says creation is groaning' (Romans 8). All the things we know about waste shows us that creation is groaning or struggling because of the way we've misused and damaged it - and the way we've damaged creation is impacting people living in poverty the most.

As Christians, we can get rid of excessive, wasteful lifestyles when we look to Jesus for our 'enough'. We can trust God's providence and appreciate what He's already given to us—His creation that He designed to give us all that we need. Only when we begin to see creation through our Creator's eyes, and understand His heart for creation, can we then better care for creation as God first intended for us to do.

Only then, can we start to create difference in the world around us.

REAL WORLD: **RUBINA'S STORY**

*Where does our garbage go?
How do you think it harms
those living in poverty?*

Many times, we drop our garbage into the bin and that's the last time we see it. But did you know that besides landfills, our trash sometimes even gets illegally exported to

less developed countries, or ends up in drains, waterways, and oceans? Our garbage ends up as far as the shores of the Philippines and Malaysia and this most greatly impacts the poor who live in slums and communities amongst this trash.



Without proper waste collection systems, people in poverty often face environmental and health problems. The alternative waste removal solution of burning waste, such as e-waste and plastic, creates air, soil, and water pollution. It also releases harmful chemicals and toxins in the air that impact people's health.

For example, Rubina is 25 and lives with her family in a slum in Islamabad, Pakistan. Waste is discarded at the edge of her community where it accumulates in large piles lining the roads and is regularly burnt to get rid of it. Rubina's elder son, Javed, who's nine, struggles with breathing problems because of toxic fumes from burning rubbish, and often has to go to the hospital. Her younger son, Tariq, has also suffered burns to his face from harmful waste near his home, and he has had to have stitches in his hand after he was cut by broken glass.

Rubina says, 'People would burn waste in the open since there were no other means of disposal. This would cause my children to cough and get sick, especially when soft drink bottles were burnt along with other plastics, causing thick, dense smoke.'

This is a garbage situation for Rubina and her community. We have a responsibility to care for God's world and people, like Rubina, as we desire to share God's heart for His creation.

ACTIVITY: POWER IN PRAYER

Considering the impact of our garbage on the world around us reveals the damage we are doing to all of God's creation — the environment, animals and people. If we continue to ignore our trash problem, do we love creation as God does?

But Our God is a God that redeems. While there remains brokenness in the world because of sin and human actions, our God is still in the business to restore—and He wants us to join Him. As He calls us to join Him, we can pray for restoration of creation, the damage that has been done, and for those that have been impacted.

Split into groups of 2-5 and pray.

Your prayer could include:

- Saying sorry for the way we've damaged creation.
- Asking God to help people like Rubina and their families.
- Asking God to help you live a lifestyle that is more caring to the Earth and those around you, and that will lead others to live the same in God's light.
- Asking God to bring environmental and garbage issues to the forefront of society's attention so we may together better care for creation

WEEK TWO

DISCUSS: WHAT A LOT OF WASTE

Plastic went viral last year and has remained a popular topic online. Lots of people are thinking creatively and coming up with cool ways to cut back on waste in their own lives.

In this video, we'll meet Rob — for a whole month he decided to wear all his rubbish to show people how much we throw away and to get them thinking.

Watch the video now...

Trash Me with Rob Greenfield: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH2otkp_EhY

Discuss:

- What do you think of Rob's idea to wear all his garbage?
- Have you ever thought about how much garbage you make?

BIBLE STUDY: GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

The story of Jesus miraculously feeding over 5,000 men, women and children with five barley loaves and two small fish is just incredible. While Jesus has been teaching the crowds, their stomachs have been grumbling. Check out the passage to find out what happens next.

• John 6:1-14 Questions:

1. What does this passage tell us about what Jesus has to offer us?
2. What does this passage tell us about Jesus's attitude towards waste?

Conclusion:

It's hard to get your head around, but there is actually more food at the end of this story than there was at the beginning. Crazy! We catch a glimpse of God's kingdom, where everyone has enough but nothing is wasted. Jesus commands the disciples to 'gather the pieces. Let nothing be wasted' and 12 baskets of leftovers are collected. All of the things we need for everyday life and all of our stuff is incredibly valuable. Our belongings have been made from the earth's precious resources. But if our food and our stuff is valuable then why on earth are we throwing so much of it away?

REAL WORLD: DAIANE'S STORY

Let me tell you about Daiane Maria. Daiane is 23 and lives with her sister and family in Recife, Brazil.

She says, 'It only has to rain and everything floods. A lot of garbage comes down the river... What I see most are water bottles and fizzy drink bottles, the type of bottles that are not returnable.'

When all the waste comes down the river, it blocks waterways and causes people's homes to flood. Plastic waste like this also creates a breeding ground for disease-carrying mosquitoes, bugs that carry dangerous diseases.

Daiane says, 'When it floods, everyone gets diarrhoea and sickness. Just this week I had to help my daughter, who was vomiting. Another problem is the rats. There are lots of rats. I get very down, but there is nothing I can do about it, because I don't have anywhere else to go.'

Daiane's community isn't the only one affected by plastic waste. Big global companies are making this rubbish problem worse. They sell billions of products in single-use plastic packaging in poorer countries where waste isn't collected.

These big companies make so much of the stuff we eat and use in Canada, but they also sell billions of plastic products in poor countries too, making things worse for communities like Daiane's. They do this in full knowledge that people will have no choice but to burn the waste, throw it into waterways or live among it.

Daiane says, 'If I could send a message to the companies, it would be to tell them to stop throwing garbage our way.'



VIDEO: TRASH IN A JAR

What can we do about this waste?

As seen, we create so much trash each day that we are often not even aware of. But there are also so many things we can do in our own lives to cut back on plastic waste. Lauren Singer lives in New York and has made loads of changes to reduce her waste.

Watch the video now...

You Can Live Without Producing Trash:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYDQcBQUdpw>

Discuss in groups:

Share some stories of people you've heard about who are reducing their waste. Maybe it's someone you know, someone you follow online, or maybe it's something you've been doing yourself to make a difference.

1. Have you, your family or friends done anything to reduce how much garbage you make? What have you done?
2. What cool ideas have you seen online from people or companies reducing their waste?
3. What could you do to cut down how much waste you throw out?

ACTIVITY: #SLASHtheTRASH CHALLENGE

Who amongst your peers will be the Trash-Free Champion?

After having learned so much about waste, and seeing what others are doing in the world to reduce their waste, it's now your turn to challenge your youth group to go waste-free for a week, to see how much waste you personally are creating!

Go up against groups across Canada to see who can create the least waste by the end of the week, and share your results. The group who creates the least trash will get to receive a Tearfund prize!

(This is an honesty system, the Earth doesn't benefit anymore from you trying to cheat out of being mindful of your true waste impact! We yearn to see God's creation being restored together, and this activity works best when we are honest with ourselves and our peers.)

Zero waste means exactly what you think it does. Throw nothing away. Every napkin, food wrapper, plastic cup or straw, plastic bag. (Except, please no food that will rot!) Lauren Singer is an American young adult who has gone zero waste and all of her trash from the last three years fits into a single biscuit jar. You can do it too!

Tell your youth group to collect every piece of trash they create in a bag or jar throughout the week, and to bring it in the next week to reflect on your trash. Everyone who participates is eligible to become your Trash-Free Champion, and to win your prize.

TIPS:

- Check out Lauren Singer's TED talk and her own blog on going zero waste for some inspiration: <http://trashisfortossers.com>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF72px2R3Hg>
- Do a bit of research about what a zero-waste lifestyle looks like. There are some good Instagram accounts you can follow.
- One great way to reduce your trash is to reduce your use of single-use plastics

The most common single-use plastic items include disposable cups, drinks bottles, non-recyclable packaging, wipes and female hygiene products. Finding alternatives to these plastics is easier than you might think! It can be very satisfying to know that you are walking that little bit lighter on the earth – and often, it saves you money too.

Seven ways to cut down on your plastic waste:

1. Switch to using a reusable coffee cup (stainless steel or bamboo cups are best).
2. Carry a reusable water bottle with you and refill it at home or work (the most long-lasting and easily recyclable types are made from stainless steel or glass).
3. Cut down on plastic packaging by buying fruit and veg loose, either from the supermarket, greengrocer or market, or in a veg box.
4. Switch to reusable cloths over wipes (even 'biodegradable' ones). Choose organic cotton or bamboo.
5. Use soap and shampoo bars instead of liquid products in plastic bottles.

What else will you do to start reducing your waste today?

GO THE EXTRA STEP!

Do you want to make a lasting difference? Collect pledges and raise money as part of the challenge! Every dollar you raise will be matched 1:1 by Tearfund and go to help plant trees in Ethiopia. These trees are essential for preventing the severe erosion of the land that many farmers throughout Ethiopia are facing.

To Donate:

- **Cheque / Cash:** Please mail cheques made out to Tearfund Canada, or cash, to 600 Alden Road, Markham, ON L3R 0E7
- **Credit Card:** To donate by credit card please either phone us using the number below or mail your card number, expiration date, name, billing address, phone number and security code.
- **Email Transfer:** etransfer@tearfund.ca ; security answer: john316
- **By Phone:** Call 1-800-567-8190

WEEK THREE

DISCUSS: HOW LONG UNTIL IT'S GONE?

So, God has created this beautiful world for us to live in and he has given us the job of taking care of it, but when we throw things away we often don't think about what happens next. In this next activity we'll think about where our trash goes and how long it lasts.

Using items from the trash you've collected over the week, guess how long your trash would take to break down. You have ten minutes to gather into small groups, discuss how long your garbage items take to break down, and order them into a line from what you guess would be the shortest time to break down to the longest time to break down.

ANSWERS

As you read the answers out, encourage the group to make sure all of theirs are in the right order and to rearrange them if not.

- **1 month:** paper bag, apple core
- **2 years:** banana skin
- **10 years:** rolled-up newspaper, cigarette butts
- **20–50 years:** plastic straws, plastic bag, pop can
- **80–200 years:** disposable coffee cup, chip bag
- **450 years:** plastic bottle, sanitary products
- **Never:** glass bottle, styrofoam cup, tinfoil

SUMMARY

Looking at our sorted list(s) now — do any of these surprise you? Why?

How many did you get right? Did anyone get all of them correct?

Lots of the plastic ones (straws, bags, chip bags, disposable cups, bottles) do break down, but they only break down into smaller and smaller pieces, so we could have put them in the 'never' category. Unlike apples or newspapers, they'll never totally disappear but just end up as loads of tiny, tiny pieces called microplastics.

DID YOU KNOW...?

If Henry VIII had drunk water from a plastic bottle and thrown it away, the plastic could still be here now! (But there were no plastic bottles in the 16th century.)

BIBLE STUDY: GOD LOVES HIS PEOPLE

Do you still remember Daiane from last week? Stories like Daiane's show just how massive our garbage problem is. And as we continue to buy from companies who contribute to plastic pollution, more people suffer. But God always has a plan.

In this passage we're about to read, God reveals that He has a plan to set the Israelites free from Egypt and their sufferings, and that He wanted to use Moses to achieve His plan.

Read Exodus 3:1-10

Ask three people to read the passage — one as the narrator, one as God's voice, and one as Moses' voice (and his thoughts).

Discuss in groups, or all together, these four questions:

1. Who does God want to rescue? Why?
2. What is God's plan for rescuing them? Who does he ask?
3. Do you think God hears the cries of people in poverty today?
4. What do you think God's plan is for rescuing them today? Who do you think he is asking?

Summary

In this passage God saw people he made and loved, suffering. This broke his heart and he had to respond — he asked Moses to go, speak up and challenge those in power to set the oppressed free. Moses began a revolution that saw all Israelites set free.

We see people suffering around the world today in lots of ways — people in poverty, slavery, people being discriminated against. God hears their cries and he asks us to be part of His plan in freeing them from this poverty.

Plastic pollution is making lives harder for people living in poverty. People like Daiane are suffering and God hears their cry.

REAL WORLD: ALAYE'S STORY

While there remains brokenness, poor communities around the world show their hope in God's restoration for our world.

So far, we have covered stories about how we are causing damage to our world and those living in poverty through our actions and wasteful lifestyles. But, people like Alaye remind us that God continues to care for us and seeks restoration for our planet and people suffering in poverty.

Using traditional farming methods, Alaye Gudo's two hectares of land in Southern Ethiopia barely yielded enough crop to feed his family, and there was never enough to sell for him to send all 8 of his children to school.

Tearfund's partners in Ethiopia took him to a neighbouring village to show him the difference conservation agriculture could make for his family.

"I learned and came home and immediately started practicing conservation agriculture, spacing the crop according to the training. I continuously covered my plot with mulch because the dry season was very long. I harvested 50 kg of lab lab bean and sold 600 kg of maize."

Alaye received improved drought resistant papaya seeds, and he has planted 36 trees. He has earned enough from selling papayas to pay for his children's schooling. He expects to get 4 years of harvest from the trees, and will not need a second job as he did before. Two of Alaye's children will graduate from secondary school year, including his daughter Wubalem Alaye.

Even though we have done lots to hurt creation and others in the world, God shows that He loves His people. And He is making all things new.

REFLECTION: #SLASHTHETRASH

After an entire week, it's time to look back and all the trash we have accumulated. In a circle (large group), go around and share with one another your experiences over the past week.

1. **COUNT.** Count how many garbage items you have collected over the week.
2. **REFLECT.** Where did get your trash? What was difficult about the challenge and reducing your waste? What came easy? What waste were you able to prevent?
3. **ENGAGE.** Discuss. Brainstorm creative ways that you could reduce the waste in the future?
4. **DECLARE WINNER.** Find the person who created the least trash over the week, and declare your TRASH-FREE CHAMPION! (If there is a tie, we leave it up to you to come up with an agreed-upon champion! This could be based on efforts, participation, garbage that will take total less time to break down, etc.)
5. **SHARE.** For your group to win a group participation prize in our #SLASHtheTRASH challenge, post one photo of your group on Instagram or Facebook with the tag #SlashtheTrash. Photo contest details are on our webpage: www.tearfund.ca/slashthetrash.

(Take an extra step? Challenge your students to continue the zero-waste #SLASHtheTRASH challenge for the rest of the month!)