

Renew Our World Bible Studies

At this moment in time,
God is calling us to
Renew Our World.
A renewed tomorrow
of justice, shalom
and welcome.

Created in the Image of God

GETTING STARTED

- ▶ Think of a place you have visited, perhaps on a holiday, which gave you a sense of awe and wonder at the beauty of the world.
- ▶ **What does it mean to be made in the image of God?**
- ▶ **Do we live as though we are made in God's image?**
- ▶ We are created in God's image, fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). However as we continue to read the opening chapters of Genesis we will discover that things did not entirely continue without incident!

READ: GENESIS 3:1-19

Humans were tempted to not trust God's authority and to seek power for themselves. In this moment sin entered the world and four key relationships became broken: between humans and God, between humans and each other, with self, and with the rest of creation. Life became harder, and people's desire to protect themselves caused them to harm others.

These four broken relationships are the root of poverty.

- ▶ **Focus on the relationship between humans and creation. How does this broken relationship lead to poverty?**

Our world is out of balance. People are being pushed further into poverty around the world because the climate is changing fast- there are more droughts, more floods, and less reliable rain. If we want to beat poverty, we need to tackle climate change and restore our relationship with creation. As followers of Jesus we are called to live by faith and seek his Kingdom, here on earth.

But God is bigger than poverty and climate change. We have a hope and a vision where Christians in rich and poor countries stand together to stop people being pushed further

into poverty by climate change. Together we will bring God's kingdom closer, in our daily lives, in our prayers and in our churches.

- ▶ **What part do you play in renewing the world?**

As you share with your group, celebrate each other's efforts and pray that each one will flourish.

- ▶ **Watch the clip**
fortomorrow.org.au/renewourworld
- ▶ **Pray**

*Dear Lord,
Renew our spirits and
cleanse our hearts
Renew our minds and
transform our lives
Renew our cities and
rebuild our ruins
Renew our world, in your
name we pray,
Amen.*

Restoring relationship with God, others, creation and ourselves.

READ: LUKE 4:16-21

Jesus' mission was to make it possible for our relationships with God, each other, ourselves and creation to be restored and made good again. This passage refers to the coming of the Kingdom of God: a time when people would be set free and when shalom (harmony) would be restored.

The passage from Luke is Jesus reading from the scroll of Isaiah at the beginning of his public ministry. It's sometimes referred to as the Nazareth Manifesto. Jesus was reading from the book of Isaiah. The verses from Luke link back to not one, but two passages.

READ: ISAIAH 61:1-4 & 58:1-10

Jesus inserted into his reading of Isaiah 61 the line 'to set the oppressed free', taken from Isaiah 58:6. Isaiah 58 is a key chapter where God tells the Israelites that their fast, or worship, is not enough without seeking justice. Jesus' bold declaration: 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4:21) at the beginning of his ministry, brings together two key Old Testament passages that make clear that justice for the poor is at the heart of his mission.

- ▶ **What does it mean to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour? Can we be a part of this in our lives and our communities today?**
- ▶ **What does this passage mean for our relationships and how we restore our relationships with God, self, others and his creation?**

Jesus shared God's love through his words, his deeds and his character, and he sought to transform the lives of the people he met in whatever way they needed most. Sometimes this involved healing them, sometimes it involved feeding them and sometimes it involved talking to them about the things that were wrong in their lives. Jesus did not discriminate between 'types' of need: he valued and served the people he met in ways that enabled them to begin living a full life. Jesus' life shows us what restored relationships and life in the Kingdom can look like, here on earth.

Renewing our relationships with God, others and creation is an ongoing and lifelong journey of discipleship.

READ: COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Within this poetic passage lies rich theology and deep exaltation of Jesus, although we will focus in on verse 20. The word peace here actually means shalom. Yet there is no one English translation for that word, so we translate it 'peace'. Shalom however means far more than just peace and quiet, it means things being as they should be, in harmony; the four key relationships restored and in their right order before God. This reading expands our understanding of what Jesus did 'through his blood, shed on the cross.' (v20)

- ▶ **What does this passage say to you about renewal and restoring relationships?**
- ▶ **What do you understand by the term 'reconcile to himself all things' in v20?**

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God wishes to renew and restore all things. This means his people, his church and our relationships, but also his world and his creation, and the great thing is that he chooses to partner with us in doing this. We are called to love our global neighbours as ourselves and also to cherish God's beautiful creation as a gift.

GETTING PRACTICAL

In 2017 and 2018, the Australian Government will undertake major reviews of its current climate change policies. The Renew Our World petition in 2017 calls on our Government to take stronger action to address the climate change challenge. The petition will cover every electorate, making it the largest coordinated multi-electorate petition in Australia's history.

Let's not miss this important opportunity to raise a powerful voice. Visit our website www.renewourworld.org.au for more details about the petition, what it calls for, how to download your copy, and for how we can achieve our goal of making an impact.

- ▶ **Can members of your group commit to be petition organisers for the first half of 2017? How can you support them to take on this role?**

For more information about the petition and to download a petition guide, visit renewourworld.org.au

▶ Pray

*Loving God,
Lord of heaven and earth,
this earth, our home,
belongs to you.*

*Give us grace to love it
as you do.*

*Give us courage to give
ourselves, as you do,
for the good of all people
and all of your creation.*

*Strengthen us to stand,
as you do,*

with the vulnerable poor.

*Give us wisdom to know
when we have enough,
and the voice to say
"enough"*

*to all that harms creation
and hurts the poorest.*

*This earth, our home,
belongs to you.*

Amen.

(Micah Australia)

How do we play our part in renewing God's world?

GETTING STARTED

- ▶ As we begin this study we would like you to use your imaginations. Imagine a world where there is enough for all. What might this look like? What would your home, your church, your local community and the global community look like? Do we see any signs of that hope and vision today?

READ: MATTHEW 5:3-16

- ▶ **What does it mean to be blessed? How can the people in this passage be blessed?**
- ▶ **What might we need to do differently to make a fair world possible?**

The Bible tells us that God wants to set people free from injustice, oppression and poverty, to live and to thrive in restored relationships with God, ourselves, each other and creation. It also tells us that we, as Christians, as part of the global church, are called to be a part of this mission. The church is called to show the world what it looks like to have a relationship with God that transforms our whole life.

The church or community that we are part of is included in this mission, we all have a part to play. We want this session to encourage and enable you to start exploring and taking practical steps to be the change you want to see in the world.

READ: ROMANS 12:1-2, 9-21

'Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.' Romans 12:1-2 (The Message)

- ▶ **What is worship? Can our ordinary, everyday actions be an act of worship? Can what we do in our ordinary, everyday lives help to renew our world?**
- ▶ **What could transformation look like in your community? How could that help to play a part in transforming the world?**
- ▶ **What one thing could you offer to God today as your act of worship? What gifts or passions do you recognise in others? How could you encourage them to play their part?**

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GETTING PRACTICAL

In the first study, you shared the efforts you are doing to renew your world. In this study, you've imagined and offered ideas of how to play your part. These actions are powerful and deserve to be magnified.

During your meeting time, draft a group letter to your Federal MP explaining the actions you're taking to renew your world. Sharing your concerns and actions to create a more sustainable environment shows your MP that these things matter to you.

You can find the name and contact details for your MP at aph.gov.au

ADDITIONAL LINKS & RESOURCES

Visit www.renewourworld.org.au

► Further Reading:

The following are excellent resources for understanding how consumerism affects our lives, and how Christians can resist the expectations of our culture.

Just Living (Ruth Valerio, 2016)

Consumer Detox (Mark Powley, 2010)

Dethroning Mammon (Justin Welby, 2016)

► Pray

Our Renew Our World partner in Peru has offered the following prayer...

Let's pray for our brothers and sisters suffering the effects of climate change: that God will provide for their needs, and that they may receive adequate support in adapting more effectively to climate change.

Let's pray for ourselves in the developed world, who are also part of the problem. Pray that in spite of the great geographical distance that separates us, we may see these vulnerable highland farmers as our 'neighbours', be concerned about them, and be willing to change our consumerist lifestyles.

Let's pray for the government of Peru and other actors, that they can better support rural farmers with their livelihoods and with adapting to climate change.

Amen.