

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS - SESSION 3

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Short of time?

These are the core activities – topic introduction, Bible basics, real life application, time to reflect – taking action, and the prayer. If you have more time, then pick and mix additional activities from those below to add to these core ones.

What are we trying to achieve?

By the end of this session, your young people should have an understanding of what it means to love the world around you and why caring for the planet is important.

Topic introduction

Note to leaders: Share this introduction with the group to set the scene for the activities and discussion to follow.

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Climate change and environmental campaigns are never far from the spotlight. Protecting our planet is something that is fast becoming the most important issue of the 21st Century. It often dominates the agenda of media outlets, political parties, international conferences and more. A trend that will probably only continue and grow over the coming decades.

The topic of protecting our planet can be particularly important to Christians, as our incredible Earth was created by God in the first place. Not only that, but he placed human beings (you & I) in charge of his creation. We read in Genesis about this, and we'll look at this in more detail later on.

When you think of environmental campaigners or activists, it can be very easy to think of the likes of Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough. But did you know our Queen and the Royal Family are also passionate about the environment and have taken significant steps to make positive changes to the way they live and how they use their voice for change.

The Queen has overseen changes across her estates to invest in renewable energy, increase wildlife biodiversity and ensure the palaces operate as efficiently as possible. But it's not just the Queen who is a champion for the environment, many of her family members have too been inspired by the Queen's leadership to take action.

[Watch this video](#) by Prince William to see what our future King has to say about the environment and our need to take action.

Quirky question

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Ask your young people the following question and have a short discussion using their answers.

If you could make three changes to the world we live in, what would they be and why?

McDonalds on every street corner? Money trees? Free wifi across the world? Let the group share their ideas. As a group, decide which is the best idea that they would like to see for real.

Afterwards highlight that these changes to the world may be unrealistic and very unlikely to happen, but we do have the ability to change the world we live in each and every day. The way we live our lives affects the planet we live on. Our impact can both be positive or negative. Are you aware that the world we are living on is changing and we all have the ability to make a difference?

Activity – Fragile, Handle with Care

Note to leaders: This activity involves space for teams to carry a tray of cups from one side of the room to the other.

What you'll need: A tray and 10 plastic cups per team. Obstacles (optional)

Length of activity: 10 minutes.

Split into teams. Give each team a large tray (or similar) and 10 plastic cups. Task them with creating a cup pyramid. When each team have created their cup pyramid, challenge the teams to transport these pyramids on their trays to the other side of the room. The tray must be jointly carried by at least two team members (ideally the whole team). To make it more difficult you could add obstacles. Should the pyramid collapse, the team must go back to the start, re-build the pyramid and start again. The first team to cross the finish line wins.

Afterwards have a conversation about how difficult the challenge was. Why was it difficult? What was it like handling something so fragile? How did the teams make sure their cup pyramids didn't collapse?

Explain that handling something fragile isn't easy - in fact it takes a lot of care and attention. The same can be said about taking care of our planet. There isn't an easy fix to looking after Earth. It's going require all of us to work hard and work together, just like we did we our cup pyramids.

Activity – Protect the Earth

Note to leaders: You'll need a medium to large space for this activity.

What you'll need: Skittles or 2L drinks bottle. Soft ball. Cones or chalk.

Length of activity: 15 minutes. w

Place a skittle or a 2L plastic bottle in the middle of the room. Around the outside of the room, draw a large circle on the floor or use cones (or similar) to mark this. Everyone should stand around this large circle.

Ask a volunteer to stand in the middle of the room next to the skittle. Explain that the skittle represents

the Earth and the volunteer is its protector. Their job is to make sure that skittle remains standing. Give the young people on the outside of the large circle a soft ball. Between them, their job is to try to knock over the skittle (Earth). The young people around the outside of the circle can pass the ball between them, in order to get a good attacking angle, but cannot come inside the circle. How long can Earth's protector do their job and protect the planet?

After each round swap Earth's protector for a new volunteer and see who can protect Earth for the longest time. Increase the difficulty by introducing more balls, more protectors or by drawing a small circle around the skittle - the protector must remain outside the small circle.

In the Bible it states that mankind has been put in charge of the planet to look after it and guard it, just like we did in this game. How well did we protect the imaginary planet in this game? Are we doing a better or worse job in real life? Would God be proud of our work so far in protecting the planet?

'The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden. He put him there to farm its land and take care of it.'
Genesis 2:15 (NIRV)

Bible basics – Humans are Made

What you'll need: A Bible.

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Read Genesis 1:26 to your group or get one of them to read it.

Then God said, 'Let us make human beings so that they are like us. Let them rule over the fish in the seas and the birds in the sky. Let them rule over the livestock and all the wild animals. And let them rule over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

Ask the group what they think this verse is saying? What do they believe is happening?

This verse comes right at the end of the story of creation. Over the five previous days, God had created a beautiful earth full of wonder, colour and life. In one last act, God then makes humans. Not just as another addition to Earth, but as the people who would look after it and have power over everything. God places a lot of responsibility into the hands of men and women, not just in that moment, but for all of time to come.

Real life application – Greta Thunberg

Note to leaders: More information about Greta Thunberg can be found online.

What you'll need: YouTube Video & Projector / TV

Length of activity: 5-10 minutes.

Possibly the most well-known contemporary environmentalist on the planet is Greta Thunberg. Ask the group what they know about Greta and her work on environmental campaigns.

Take a look at who Greta is and what she stands for with [this 3-minute video](#).

You might also want to [watch this video](#) of Greta meeting veteran environmentalist Sir David Attenborough.

Did You Know:

- 👑 Greta started protesting outside the Swedish Parliament when she was just 15.
- 👑 Greta's strike action involved walking out of school on most Fridays to protest. Since her one person strike, more than 1.5 million others have been inspired to do the same in more than 100 countries across the world.
- 👑 Greta has attended major meetings of world leaders, including the UN climate conference, addressing (and often standing up to) the most powerful people on the planet.
- 👑 She has been nominated for three Nobel peace prizes.

Greta saw a planet being impacted by climate change and decided to do something about it. As a young teenager, she was conscious that her generation would be living with the consequences of the actions others have already taken. She took a stand and proved that one person can truly make a difference.

Ask the group if any of them have ever taken a stand against something? This might be against a bully at school, a decision being made at home, the actions of their friends or something similar (it may be good for a leader to have an example from their life they can share). How does standing up for something make you feel? Have you ever not stood up for something you believed in or knew was right, because you were worried about what others would think or the consequences?

Finally ask the group if they think Greta is living out God's command for mankind to look after and protect the planet? Whilst none of us are doing as much as Greta, do we feel like we are doing enough to look after God's creation? Do Greta's actions inspire you to do more?

Time to reflect – Thinking it through

Note to leaders: Discuss the thoughts below to help your young people to explore the beauty of our planet and the instruction from God to care and protect it.

What you'll need: Mobile phones or magazines.

Length of activity: 5-10 minutes.

Whether you believe in a God who created our world or not, it's impossible to ignore that the world around us is incredible, beautiful and precious. Spend some time as a group talking about creation and the things that impress you most about it. This could be by searching on your phones or in magazines for pictures of just how impressive our planet is. Who can find the most awe-inspiring photo?

Christians believe that every part of our world was created by God, from the largest mountain to the smallest grain of sand. Every plant, animal, landscape, sunrise and sunset is shaped by God's hand. Everything around us is brought to life by God.

Genesis 1:26 is clear. The planet we love so much has been placed in our care. God has put his trust in us to look after and protect it. That's a huge responsibility and one we are all called to take seriously.

JB Gill, TV presenter and former boy band JLS member shares a Christian view on looking after the environment [here](#).

Ask the group if they think we as a human race are doing a good job of protecting the Earth? Or do we need to step up our game and start taking this seriously? How do they think God feels about us mistreating and misusing his creation?

Time to reflect – Taking action

Note to leaders: Pose these questions to your group and then listen to their answers.

Length of activity: 5-10 minutes.

What can you do as a group or as individuals to start making a difference to our planet? There are a huge range of ways you can reduce your carbon footprint, increase the amount you recycle, care for nature, make your voice heard and more.

Create an environmental pledge as a group on ways you can make some changes to start making a difference. Could you reduce the amount of single-use plastic used by the group? Turn lights off if a room is empty? Pledge to walk/cycle to your group rather than arriving by car – or at least share lifts? Can you encourage other people in your community to get involved with an action?

Greta started as one person and one voice, but look where she ended up. One person or one group can really change the world. What are you waiting for?

Challenge – The Queen’s Green Canopy

Note to leaders: This activity will require preparation beforehand and may need to take place at a certain time of year due to the tree planting season.

What you’ll need: Tree planting equipment and resources.

Length of activity: 30 minutes

The Queen’s Green Canopy (QGC) is a tree planting initiative created to mark the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Everyone across the UK is being invited to plant trees during the Jubilee year in 2022.

The Queen’s Green Canopy will create a network of individual trees, avenues and woodlands in honour of the Queen’s service and the legacy she has built. This will create a green legacy of its own, with every tree planted bringing benefits to people, wildlife and the climate, now and for the future.

Get involved by planting a tree in your local community. You’ll need to make sure you have somewhere suitable (and with permission!) to plant the tree.

For more information about the campaign and to get involved [here](#).

You might want to [watch this video](#) about the Queen’s tree planting initiative.

Let us pray – A Prayer for our Planet

Note to leaders: Share this prayer with your group.

Length of activity: 1 minute.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for giving us such a beautiful and inspiring planet. Thank you for nature, animals and the people you created. We are so grateful for this amazing gift. Help us to remember that you left us in charge of your creation and we therefore have a big responsibility to care for it and protect it. Give us the vision to see what needs doing, the strength to make tough decision, and the power to make a change.

Lord we also pray for our world leaders, the people who have many of the decisions about our environment in their hands. We pray for their wisdom and courage over the coming years.

Amen.

70 Acts of Service

The Queen has served the UK and the Commonwealth for 70 years. To honour her, let's join together in [70 Acts of Service](#) during 2022.