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Personal lifestyle

In this book so far, we have looked at how staff in organisations and projects can look after God's creation. But what about individual followers of Christ? Whatever our lifestyle and background, God asks us to care for the world that he has made, and to love our neighbours as ourselves (see Section 2). This means that we need to take action when we work, when we go to church and when we are at home. Although consumption of the earth's resources and carbon emissions vary from home to home and country to country, God is honoured by any action to love his creation and other people. If everyone made even small actions, the world would rapidly become much more environmentally sustainable. Our lives should reflect our practical care for creation.

This section gives some ideas of ways in which we can personally change our lifestyles in order to care for God's creation better. It is important to remember that we should change our actions out of a desire to serve God, and not just as a tick-list which we want to complete.

Lifestyle changes

The things we do each day involve consuming the earth's resources. This includes the goods and services such as food, drink, clothing and household equipment and the energy involved in their production, packaging and transportation. Although we cannot live without using resources, we can easily use them needlessly or throw them away. The box on page 81 shows strategies that can be used to deal with waste.

There are also actions we can take to reduce our personal environmental footprint. This includes using less energy.

In the home we can:

- use more efficient ways of cooking, such as using improved stoves, covering pans, cooking several items together in an oven or pan, and boiling only the amount of water we need for hot drinks.
- turn off lights when we leave a room and switch off electrical appliances such as televisions, mobile phone chargers and computers when not in use. Although energy-efficient light bulbs are more expensive to buy, they are cheaper overall because they last a long time.
- wear more clothes in cold weather rather than using heating. Open windows or use curtains or window blinds rather than using air conditioning in hot weather.
- invest money in renewable energy for heating water and generating electricity, such as solar panels.
- recycle items such as paper and glass where possible.

For transport we can:

- walk or cycle, share transport or use public transport.
- drive more efficiently (light use of brakes and accelerator) and ensure cars are well maintained, for example, keeping tyres at the correct pressure. Switch engines off when stationary.

- live close to our workplace, church, friends and family.
- reduce the number of flights.

To identify areas of high carbon use and to monitor progress over time, use the table on page 43 to measure your household's carbon footprint. Most households also have indirect carbon emissions related to products that we buy. For example, food that is bought in a market or supermarket has emissions associated with it through transport, processing, packaging and so on. These indirect household emissions tend to be much higher in the North and among wealthier households.

Changing our personal actions in terms of how we consume resources requires sacrifice. This sacrifice needs to be a lot bigger for people who already consume much, such as those in countries of the North and wealthy people living in urban areas. However, whoever we are, our actions will make a difference locally, nationally and internationally. Let us continue to make steps to love God's creation and to love others. By doing so we can point people towards our creator God and glorify him.

Advocacy

It can be much harder to speak out for our own personal beliefs than to advocate with an organisation. People may not understand what we are saying or criticise us because they think we are judging them. God calls us to speak out on issues of injustice. We need his help to speak with wisdom, humility and love so that positive action results. Here are two ways to advocate:

- There is a lot we can do through leading by example – by minimising our use of the earth's resources and reducing our carbon footprint. This can put us in a good position to gently suggest similar action to our friends, neighbours, churches and schools.
- To have a bigger impact, we can join a campaign with others in the local area. Many environmental organisations need local advocates to support their causes through building relationships with people in power, getting signatures on a petition and helping with awareness-raising events.

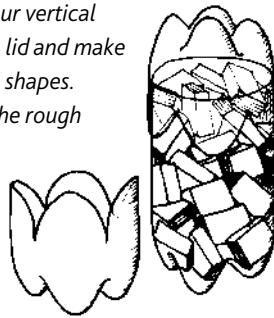
Management of waste – reduce, reuse and recycle

- **REDUCE** Many materials take a long time to decay so the best solution is to reduce the rubbish we make in the first place, such as by avoiding products with a lot of packaging and only buying things that we really need. We should try to repair broken items rather than replacing them with new items. Do not use plastic bags or bottles if possible.
- **REUSE** Use items such as boxes or bags as many times as possible or make them into new items. For example, make furniture out of scrap wood and use glass jars to store food and office supplies.
- **RECYCLE** If items such as glass bottles, metal and tin cans, newspapers and plastics cannot be reused, it may be possible for them to be recycled. Some countries have factories that will recycle these materials. Organic, uncooked waste from kitchens and gardens can be composted and used to improve the structure and water-holding capacity of soil.

CREATIVE WAYS OF REUSING MATERIALS For further ideas see *Footsteps 59*

Plastic bottle packaging

Use the bottoms of two bottles, one to make the container and the other to make the lid. Make four vertical cuts around the lid and make them into petal shapes. Smooth down the rough edges and put the lid on.

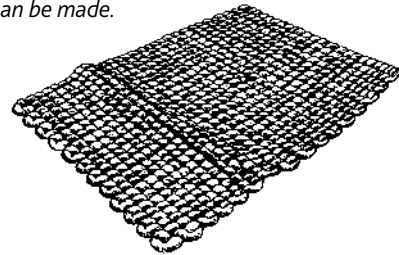


Plant container

Cut off the side of a car tyre and line the base to use for growing plants.

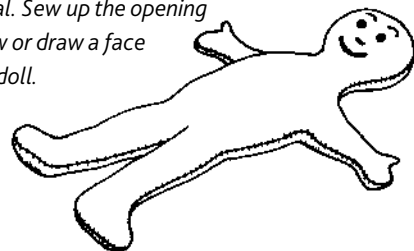
Plastic bag mats

When plastic bags can no longer be used as bags because of holes, they can be knotted or woven into mats. If coloured plastic bags are used, patterned mats can be made.



Doll

Cut out two doll shapes from a piece of cloth and sew the edges together, leaving a small opening. Turn the doll inside out and stuff with scraps of material. Sew up the opening and sew or draw a face on the doll.



- **HAZARDOUS WASTE** Dangerous rubbish includes chemical rubbish such as batteries, many cleaning products and insecticides. Medical waste, such as needles, syringes, old medicines and soiled bandages can also be dangerous. Governments around the world are slowly persuading industries to make waste less hazardous. We should avoid pouring toxic liquid, such as used motor oil, paint and pesticides into rivers or lakes or down the sink and instead find the nearest site that will take them and get rid of them safely.

