

SOCIAL & ETHICAL ISSUES GROUP

THE PERSISTENCE OF PLASTICS

Plastics are an everyday part of our lives. But the consequences of their use are devastating.

It has been claimed that there are 500 times more pieces of microplastic in the sea than stars in our galaxy. By 2050 it is estimated there will be more large plastic items than fish in our oceans.

Why is plastic bad?

- It's **made from fossil fuels** - producing plastic creates pollution
- It has a **huge carbon footprint** from manufacturing and shipping
- Plastics **last for hundreds of years**
- **Only a tiny percentage of plastics are 'recycled'** - the rest goes to landfill or incinerators
- Plastic pollution isn't just an issue for the 'western world', it affects the **poorest countries** even more

In Genesis 1.26 we read, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

Exercising dominion

God gave us dominion over Earth. We're called to rule over it, and to be good stewards. We are not to neglect or ruin it. As we exercise dominion over the created world, we do it knowing that we mirror God. We're not the originals but the images, and our duty is to use the original - God - as our pattern, not ourselves. Our work is meant to serve God's purposes more than our own, so we can't abuse what God has put under our control.

Today we see human self-interest threatening the natural environment. We were meant to tend and care for the garden (Genesis 2:15). Creation is meant for our use, but not *only* for our use.

Rosie Walker, one of our members, works for a conservation charity.

Rosie alerts us to the massive damage plastic pollution is doing already to our environment and warns of the potential of its disastrous impact.



Remembering that the air, water, land, plants and animals are good (Genesis 1:4-31) reminds us that we are meant to sustain and preserve the environment. Our behaviours can either preserve or destroy the clean air, water, land, the biodiversity, the ecosystems and biomes, and even the climate with which God has blessed his creation. Dominion is not the authority to work *against* God's creation, but the ability to work *for* it.

Transformed thinking?

Romans 12.2: 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

As Christians in the world, it's easy for consumerist culture to shape our behaviour. This verse applies to all aspects of our lives and covers environmental impact too. Could we allow ourselves to be 'transformed'?

'Every now and then there are major shifts in Christian thinking, as we wake up to biblical truths which our culture has prevented us from seeing. Two hundred years ago it was Christians such as William Wilberforce who

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The Persistence of Plastics (contd)

changed the way people thought about slavery. I believe we are at one of those moments today. It's as if we're removing a pair of tinted glasses that coloured our whole view of life. Our culture - especially our Western, urban, industrial, consumer culture - has surrounded us so effectively that we've failed to notice the plain message of the Bible on creation and our place in it. Now, at last, we're being forced to reconsider as we face up to the damage our way of life has been causing to this planet.'
Planetwise

Prayer and Action

Changing our habits can seem overwhelming. And sometimes we can't reduce our plastic consumption, for example in health care. However, we can make small changes, challenging behaviours that are now habits and supporting each other to reduce our environmental impact.

Consider praying about this issue, asking God how you can have a positive effect on his creation. A great start is to reduce your consumption of single use plastics: anything we use only once - food packaging, water bottles, toiletries, straws, spoons, take away coffees. Few people become 100% plastic free, but if everyone made changes we would have an amazing impact.

Consider these 3 easy steps:

REFUSE: Try to avoid single use plastics. When shopping, try buying in bulk, choosing loose vegetables and taking your own bags.

REUSE: Bags for life are only good if we reuse them! On average it takes 12 uses to make them equal to one normal bag.

RECYCLE: Recycle everything you can! See your local authority's waste website for info.

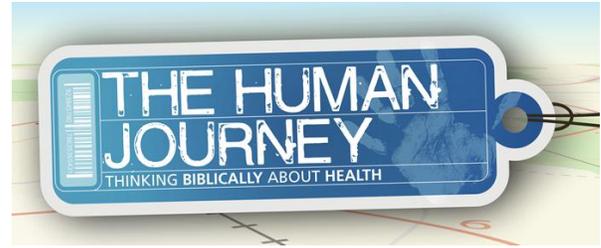
ASSISTED SUICIDE AGAIN AT HOLYROOD

A cross-party group of MSPs has begun a campaign to legalise assisted suicide in Scotland.

Two previous attempts to change the law have been heavily defeated in the Scottish Parliament.

The MSPs claim that 80% of Scots are in favour of permitting assisted suicide, although research has shown that when the full implications of assisted suicide are explained, peoples' opinions frequently change.

A RESOURCE FOR YOUR HOME GROUP



Leaders of home groups are reminded that **The Human Journey**, produced by the Christian Medical Fellowship, is an ideal resource for home groups wishing to explore issues surrounding health and bioethics.

The package of materials comprises a DVD, leader's guide and a study guide for participants.

There are seven components, comprising

- Humanity - what does it mean to be human?
- Start of Life – when does life begin?
- Marriage & Sexuality – what is marriage for?
- Physical Health – how should I live?
- Mental Health – am I supposed to feel like this?
- End of Life – how should life end?
- New Technologies – are we playing God?
- Global Health – who is my neighbour?

Each of these components is self-standing, so it is possible to select only some of the topics, depending on the interests of the group and the time available.

The Social and Ethical Issues Group has a set of The Human Journey which can be lent out to home groups. Contact Bill Baird if you'd like to review the material.

G.P. LEADERS WANT TO DECRIMINALISE ABORTION

In a surprising announcement, The Royal College of General Practitioners has recently announced that

“The College will now work with partners across the health sector, including the BMA, the Royal College of Nursing, Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health, the Royal College of Midwives and others, to call for the decriminalisation of abortion across the UK.”

For comment on this from the Christian Medical Fellowship, see <https://cmfblog.org.uk/> (the article entitled 'Two giants are approaching.')