

Carbon Footprints.

A recent article in the Scotsman supplement said that we're all suffering from 'green fatigue', being confused by the variety of messages and fed up with being told how to live our lives!

But as Christians, we can't ever grow tired of caring for God's creation. God looked at what he'd created and declared it to be good, and he gave mankind the task of filling the earth and subduing it.

This initial careful work of God was not the end of his involvement. Throughout the Bible, He is depicted as intimately involved with and sustaining his creation at every moment. And creation is shown not as a passive, lifeless collection of rocks and earth, but as an entity that is full of life, full of praise, and full of God's glory.

The problem is that in recent times we have indeed filled the earth, but in the wrong way. We have put pollution, toxins and chemicals into the environment and we have created landfill sites to dump our rubbish in. The 'greenhouse effect' has predominantly been caused by the western world and our convenient lifestyles. The rise in greenhouse gases is primarily down to us using more energy in our everyday lives. Often it is the things that make our life simpler, things that we take for granted, that are causing the problem.

We leave behind a footprint as we walk on God's earth for this short time. But the mark we leave doesn't just affect us. Our global neighbours feel the impact of our convenient lifestyle. Climate change related symptoms such as floods, droughts, sea level rises and unreliable seasons are causing havoc and destroying lives in the developing world.

Here are a few testimonies about the impact of climate change taken from communities Tearfund works with.

'The weather has been changing for many years. It is just that we have not been taking note of it. I am 51 years old and I remember when I was young experiencing nice cool weather and receiving good rains in our village. Big streams would be flowing with water throughout the year. I would be walking to school with a good forest cover on the way. It was beautiful. It is not now.'

River of Life, Tearfund partner in Malawi.

'For the last five years we had no good rains and then last year we had flooding. It was devastating for us. Eight people lost their lives and more than 1,000 houses collapsed in the district (Balangir). It was a shock to the people because almost all the rivers were swollen, many trees were uprooted, houses collapsed and animals died. Crops were ruined and even now, many people have been unable to rebuild their homes – they lost everything.'

Eficor, Tearfund partner in India.

The Bible is full of verses and passages where God declares his interest in the poor, and where he makes it clear that he expects his people to care for the poor, protect them and not exploit them.

It can be easy for us to blame others for their part in causing the problem – it's all America's/China's/multinational's/SUV driver's fault! But what we need to do is look at the situation and say, I am part of the problem, what can I do?

One of the things we can do is to make our voices heard. It is true that things need to change at governmental and business level, and that is why campaigning is so important. We need to hold our government to account over the promises they've made about climate change, and encourage them to lead the way in encouraging business and other countries to take this seriously too.

That is why Tearfund is asking you to send one of our climate change postcards both to Gordon Brown and to Alex Salmond. These are available from the Tearfund Scotland office (0141 332 3621). Or to campaign by email you can go to www.tearfund.org/campaigning .

One of the other things that we can do is to adapt our lifestyles. Even making the smallest of changes can make a difference if we all do them. For example if every household in the UK replaced 3 regular light bulbs with energy saving ones, it would save 1.5 million tonnes of CO2 annually.

Below is a **list of ideas**, from very simple things that can be done every day, through to some ideas that may take a bit more planning. You may have other things you'd like to add to it. It is by no means exhaustive but rather a few thoughts to get you started.

- Only fill the kettle with the water you need.
- Don't leave electrical goods on standby.
- Close fridge door.
- Allow food to cool before putting it in fridge.
- Turn lights off when you leave a room.
- Use rechargeable batteries.
- Turn the heating down. (Use extra jumper/blanket/hot water bottle rather than turn on the heat – especially if only one of you is a bit chilly!)
- Wash clothes at lower temperature – and full loads.
- Eco light bulbs.
- Eco products – Ecover are a good range that can be found in the supermarket.
- Install a dual flush loo if you're changing your bathroom.
- Put a 'brick' in your cistern to lower your use of water each time you flush.
- Supermarket – take own shopping bags/choose less packaging/look at air miles/use farmers markets.
- Use charity shops/ebay/freecycle.
- Compost and grow your own.
- Sign up to green energy products.
- Drive slower/fill your tyres (under inflated tyres can increase your fuel consumption by up to 8%)
- Turn off car engine while waiting.
- Share lifts (journeys) – work/church/kids activities.
- Public transport/park and ride.
- Use refill packs.
- Buy energy efficient appliances.
- Buy recycled paper goods.
- Don't run the tap while brushing your teeth.
- Make sandwiches for lunch rather than buying.

As you can see there are so many ideas – and having such a long list may seem a bit overwhelming. So the suggestion would be to start small and simple. Choose just three from the list above (or ones of your own choosing). Write them down and pin them up somewhere at home where you will look at them regularly. Keep them pinned up until you have done all

three, or until they have become part of your habitual lifestyle. Then come back and choose another three ideas, and keep going!

You can get lots of other ideas by having a look at Tearfund's simple lifestyle guide *For Tomorrow Too*. For your free copy you can again call the Tearfund Scotland office (number above) or order online. Also you can check out the lifestyle zone of Tearfund's website which can be found at www.tearfund.org/lifestyle .

There are a few other questions that it may be useful to ask yourself about your lifestyle and the choices that you make.

Again, you may find it useful to have these written up somewhere to remind you to keep thinking about these issues.

Can I reduce how much I use?

Can I reuse this?

Could someone else use it?

Can I recycle it?

Can I borrow this rather than buy it?

Can I get it second hand?

And finally, we need to spread the word. As you start to make changes, why not encourage your household and your church to change too? It's going to take all of us to get involved and play our part – so what are we waiting for?

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Resources to help you do it!

Books.

L is for Lifestyle – Ruth Valerio

Green Christianity – Tim Cooper

Lift the Label – David Westlake and Esther Stansfield

Planetwise – Dave Bookless

The Good Shopping Guide

For use with others.

Simplicity, Love and Justice – J.Odgers & R.Valerio

The Whole Wide World – Phil and Rachel Bowyer. (for families or those working with primary aged children.)

Websites.

www.tearfund.org/climate