

40 DAYS OF LENT  
40 REFLECTIONS  
40 SIMPLE ACTS OF GENEROSITY

WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY TO SATURDAY 30 MARCH

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BIBLE STUDY SESSIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS  
FOR USE DURING LENT 2013.

JOIN THE 40ACTS CHALLENGE TO TAKE PART IN  
FORTY DAILY GENEROUS ACTS DURING LENT 2013.

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# WELCOME TO 40ACTS

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## What is 40acts?

40acts is a generosity challenge which invites people to do Lent a bit differently. During the forty days of Lent, 40acts participants will be invited to take part in forty simple acts of generosity which will challenge them to 'do Lent generously' in 2013.

Lent marks a pivotal point in the history of the church, when Jesus prepared to give himself up as a sacrifice. Traditionally we mark Lent by giving something up, but what if it could be more than that? What if Lent was a preparation for a lifetime of big-heartedness?

Small acts of generosity, performed by thousands of Christians across the UK and beyond, have the power to make a big change to our communities, to our churches and ultimately, to our world.

## How does this resource pack work?

This course is divided into seven separate sessions and provides adaptable meeting guides, activity ideas and links to video clips. In order to follow the seven-week period of Lent 2013 (Wednesday 13 February to Saturday 30 March 2013), the course will work best when run on a weekly basis. Each session should last approximately one hour.

**The resource has been designed to suit a wide range of ages and interests. Group leaders should feel able to adapt or remove certain sections of each session to suit the needs and interests of their particular group.**

→ **The aim**

To see, and be prepared for, the opportunities that God lays across our paths.

→ **Preparation**

You will need a laptop to show the clip from Seabiscuit ([wingclips.com/movie-clips/seabiscuit/how-to-be-a-horse](http://wingclips.com/movie-clips/seabiscuit/how-to-be-a-horse)). You will also need some small bags; enough for one per person (lightweight drawstring bags are best). Either source them yourself or have each person bring one in with them. You will also need a large piece of paper and pens.

**Activity**

5 minutes

Start by showing the clip from the film Seabiscuit. Introduce it by explaining that it is a film about a horse, trainer and jockey who all rediscover their true potential. In this clip the team discover one of the keys to making that happen.

**Talking point**

5 minutes

Like so many of us, Seabiscuit had become confused about what he was meant to be doing. He needed to remember what it was that he was created to do. Encourage people to talk about those individuals who have inspired them to have a clear sense of their God-given calling and purpose. How have they managed this?

**Read**

10 minutes

Introduce the story of Joshua's arrival in Canaan and his preparation to capture the enemy city of Jericho. Explain that the passage shows Joshua preparing to lead the army on to victory. Then read Joshua 5:13-15.

**The big idea**

5 minutes

Joshua was focused on the battle that was about to start, which explains why he asked whose side the swordsman was on. But his question shows that he has failed to comprehend the

truth of the situation. This is God's battle that he's about to fight, not Joshua's. This isn't a case of God pitching in to help the Israelites crush the Canaanites; it's another step in the establishment of God's kingdom, another move to bring salvation to the world. The real question is whether Joshua is on God's side, whether he is fighting the Lord's battle or his own. We can all fall into this trap from time to time. We get into the habit of thinking that we are the main character in our lives, when the truth is different. We are here to learn from, to love, serve, be loved by and follow God. Like Seabiscuit, we all need to rediscover what we were made to do. From time to time we all need to rediscover our purpose.

**Questions**

5 minutes

So what is it that God has called us to? At this point it's important to stress that while we're all individuals with unique skills, talents and opportunities, there are some key things that every Christian should be doing.

Encourage the group to look at Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:1-10 - The Message translation is particularly good for this task) and use your sheet of paper to draw up a list of tasks and responsibilities that are common to us all.

Steer people towards the conclusion that our common responsibilities are to care for people who are overwhelmed, who are grieving, who need peace, who are poor and so on.

**It's over to you**

5 minutes

Introduce the idea of a Generosity Kit - a bag that has a few key items in it that will allow people to be spontaneously generous. Explain that each person is going to plan what to put into their Generosity Kit, and urge them to refer back to the previous exercise, thinking about what kind of items might be of use to those who are stressed, poor, upset and so on. Some of these items might feature in your kits, but be as creative as possible as you add to the list...

- tissues
- hi-vis jacket
- bar of chocolate
- first aid kit

- socks
- small change
- vouchers or gift card for a free cup of coffee
- pocket umbrella to give away

**Conclusion**

5 minutes

Remember what Joshua did when he realised that he'd got the story wrong? He did as he was told and took off his shoes. And after that he did exactly what God said; he marched around those city walls for a week before they fell and the city became theirs. There's a lesson for us here as well. Following God's lead might take us into some unusual situations and leave us looking a little odd to others, but the adventure will be amazing. These Generosity Kits might lead us into some odd situations - helping people we might not usually spend time with - but with God in charge and us following faithfully after, we're on course for a great God-scripted adventure.

**Pray**

5 minutes

Father God, we admit that we are guilty of getting the story wrong by thinking that what matters most is us - how we feel and how we get on. We're sorry for this and ask you to forgive us.

Help us instead to look to you for guidance and follow your directions. Wake us up to your Holy Spirit and lead us to help the people that you want to reach. Give us courage to follow your prompts. Thank you for letting us in on the action!

**This weeks 4oacts**

**Wednesday 13 February:** Create a generosity kit

**Thursday 14 February:** Love

**Friday 15 February:** Make a list

**Saturday 16 February:** Get uncomfortable

Visit [4oacts.org.uk](http://4oacts.org.uk) to find out more about 4oacts and to sign up to daily challenges during Lent 2013.

## WEEK 2

Love where you live

### → The aim

To think about the ways in which we can be used for good by God in our communities.

### → Preparation

You will need Bibles, a stack of local newspapers, scissors, glue, marker pens and a large sheet of paper (the bigger the better, A1 or A2 size would be best). Before the meeting, draw a simple outline of your locality on it (just key streets and areas). You will also need some chocolates.

### Activity

5 minutes

As you recap on the previous session and explain the aim of this session, divide the group into two halves (men and women, those wearing glasses vs. those that do not - it doesn't really matter which criteria you use to divide them, the more arbitrary the better.) Only offer the chocolates to one half of the group.

### Talking point

5 minutes

Introduce the map of your locality and ask people to mark the place where they live. As they are doing this ask those who did not receive any chocolate how they felt. For those who had worked out that it was a deliberate ploy, ask whether knowing that fact was much consolation. Once everyone has plotted their home on the map, ask people to mark an area on it where there are real life examples of injustice and unfairness.

### Read

10 minutes

Read 1 John 3:16-20. It's one of those passages which can prompt some good discussions, so encourage people to talk about the specifics: what does it really mean to 'lay down our lives'? Is it literal or metaphorical? And what about 'our brothers and sisters' - who are they? How do we show more pity on people? And what about 'if our hearts condemn us' - what's that about? Help people pick through the trickier elements

[www.40acts.org.uk](http://www.40acts.org.uk)

of these verses, bringing them to a clear view of both the challenge that they represent and the opportunity to 'belong to the truth'.

### The big idea

10 minutes

In pairs, allow people a few minutes to think of tangible examples of need in your local area. You can use the local newspapers for this as well - getting people to flick through and cut out any pictures, headlines or stories that show injustice, need or poverty in your area. Invite each pair to feed their ideas back to the main group and ask to people write, draw or stick these needs on the map.

Next, encourage people to think about the resources that they have - both individually and collectively. The lists might include things like money, clothes, toys or household items they could donate, time they could use to support people etc. Suggest people add these resources to the map - drawing/writing them down by where they live.

### Questions

5 minutes

Read out Matthew 5:13-16.

1. How can a church like yours be like a 'city on a hill'?

Think about what a city on a hill might look like: strong, full of potential etc.

2. What about being the 'light of the world'? What does this tell us about the way that Jesus' followers ought to be?

Encourage people to think about the dark situations that need God's light to be shone upon.

3. What does it mean to be the 'salt of the earth'?

Talk about the idea of salt being hard to spot but easy to taste - linking that back to the idea of Jesus' followers going out into the world and making a real difference wherever they are.

### It's over to you

5 minutes

Think openly about the kind of group you are. Do you feel that you are strong and welcoming like a city? Are you changing the dark places by your light? Are you mixed in with the world around you, transforming it by your

very lives? If a stranger was able to observe you for a whole week, what conclusions would he draw about the God you're following?

### Conclusion

5 minutes

Encourage people to get into pairs or threes and think of ways in which they could use the resources and talents that they have to help challenge some of the injustice in your local community. It might mean offering friendship to someone who is lonely, giving away time, money or certain possessions to those who need them or maybe encouraging other people in the church to get together, to tackle an even bigger need and make a bigger difference.

Encourage people to share their ideas with the wider group and then allow time for prayer.

### Pray

5 minutes

Father God, you have given us so much. We are grateful to you for the privilege of our lives. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of a church, to share the journey with others. But we're sorry for the times when we've treated church more like a club to keep us amused and occupied and less like a city on a hill, designed to attract and help others.

Be with us this week as we try to make a difference. Give us patience and wisdom, bravery and compassion, and most of all, send your Holy Spirit to guide us as we try to serve others.

In your name we pray.  
Amen.

### This weeks 40acts

**Monday 18 February:** Read the local news

**Tuesday 19 February:** Be a mentor

**Wednesday 20 February:** Visit your local

**Thursday 21 February:** Cross a generation

**Friday 22 February:** Get together

**Saturday 23 February:** Grab a cuppa  
Read the local news

Visit [40acts.org.uk](http://40acts.org.uk) to find out more about 40acts and to sign up to daily challenges during Lent 2013.

→ **The aim**

To think about the ways in which our purchases can connect us with people living in poverty - making their lives better or worse.

→ **Preparation**

You'll need some Fairtrade chocolate, paper and pens, and a laptop.

**Activity**

5 minutes

Start by asking people what they know about Fairtrade. Chances are that some will be well informed already, but recap to make sure that everyone's clear about what it is and how it works.

Now move on to this quiz. Try getting people into groups and working out their answers together. Use the Fairtrade chocolate as the prize.

1. On average how much do we each spend on clothes each year in the UK?

Answer: £400

2. How many pairs of shoes does the average American woman own?

Answer: 30 pairs

3. What percentage of the world's garment workers are female?

Answer: 90%

4. What percentage of children between 4 and 14 in the developing world work?

Answer: 25%

5. In China you need to earn 50p per hour to maintain a basic standard of living. What do you think is the average pay for garment workers?

Answer: 15p per hour

5. In China you need to earn 50p per hour to maintain a basic standard of living. What do you think is the average pay for garment workers?

Answer: 15p per hour

**Talking point**

5 minutes

Does God care about our shopping habits? Does it matter what we buy, how it was made or what kind of conditions the people worked in? How

responsible are we as consumers for the consequences of the supply chain? Discuss the possible viewpoints.

**Read**

5 minutes

Look at Amos 8:4-6 and fill in the context: Amos is speaking to the corrupt business practices of the day and lists five things that God dislikes. First up there's the fact that they couldn't wait to get the trade-free Sabbath and festival days over and done with so that they could get back to business. Then there's the line about 'skimping the measure... and cheating with dishonest scales'. Ask people to describe the other three examples of bad business.

Does anything of what Amos describes remind us of businesses today? Perhaps the idea of trading on the Sabbath reminds us of the way that so many shops today are open as much as they can. What about the other four – are there any links between what Amos criticised and what we are used to today?

If people are stuck, highlight these phrases:

- 'skimping the measure,... and cheating with dishonest scales'
- 'boosting the price'
- 'buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals'
- 'selling the sweepings with the wheat'

**The big idea**

10 minutes

We might not know how Jesus shopped, but we do know how he treated people - especially the poor. Talk about some of those stories together and see if you can come up with a sense of how Jesus might have responded to some of the choices we face on the high street today. Suggest looking at Proverbs 29:7, Luke 10:7 and Proverbs 13:23 to help form a clearer picture.

**Questions**

5 minutes

Ask people to look at the manufacturer's label from an item of clothing that they are wearing. It should contain information on the care requirements of the garment, what it's made from and where it was made.

What it won't say is anything about the way in which the workers who made the garment were treated. Ask people to imagine what life might be like for the garment worker paid 15p an hour.

1. What must their working conditions be like?
2. What dangers do they face?
3. What future can they look forward to?

**It's over to you**

10 minutes

Encourage people to think about the way that our food is produced and the story behind our clothes. Using a laptop, take a look at [www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org). The website provides information relating to how ethical your favourite food and clothing retailers are. You may not have time to fully explore the site during your session but encourage people to do their own research later. Suggest a practical experiment: encourage people to make a shopping plan for the next few days, making at least one choice each day, mindful of the issues that have been discussed. It might mean buying the Fairtrade option at the cafe, choosing a more sustainable alternative to a product on the weekly shopping list or making a decision to buy from an alternative clothing store.

Whatever people plan to do, have them team up with others in order to stay accountable.

**Conclusion**

5 minutes

Bring people back to the idea of us having so many choices. It can sometimes feel a little overwhelming but there's another way of looking at it: our choice gives us power. Even choosing to buy fairly traded fruit or an ethically made pair of jeans can make a difference. We might feel like we're just throwing pebbles into the ocean, but the Gospel teaches us that we are all responsible before God for the choices we make.

Finally, here are two great quotes which say it all:

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.' Margaret Mead

'We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the cruel

words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.' Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Pray

5 minutes

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Father God, we might think that we don't have enough money, enough influence or enough time, but we know that you see us differently. You see us as your children, created with a purpose and full of potential. Please help us to use our money, our time and our voice to help others, not to harm them.

Forgive us when we have closed our eyes and ears to the truth about the way that our shopping hurts others. Help us to see the many ways in which you weave our stories together with the lives of others. Open our eyes, God and use us for your glory.

### This weeks 40acts

**Monday 25 February:** Buy Fairtrade

**Tuesday 26 February:** Give intelligently

**Wednesday 27 February:** Share the Bible

**Thursday 28 February:** Check the label

**Friday 1 March:** Celebrate cultural diversity

**Saturday 2 March:** Live on a fiver

Visit [40acts.org.uk](http://40acts.org.uk) to find out more about 40acts and to sign up to daily challenges during Lent 2013.

## WEEK 4

Make someone's day

### → The aim

To think about other people and how we can help and encourage them.

### → Preparation

Read 1 Corinthians 12. Get some post-its and pens, a copy of the film *Forest Gump* (1994) and a laptop. Provide one sheet of paper and pen for each person.

### Activity

10 minutes

Show the scene from *Forest Gump* where he rescues men from his platoon ([wingclips.com/movie-clips/forrest-gump/i-gotta-find-bubba](http://wingclips.com/movie-clips/forrest-gump/i-gotta-find-bubba)).

### Talking point

5 minutes

What other films can people name that deal with this same notion of sacrifice? (Hint: *Saving Private Ryan*, *Schindler's List*, *The Lord of the Rings* and many more). Why is the theme so popular? Do we end up becoming better people for watching these films or are we trying to assuage our guilt?

### Read

5 minutes

1 Corinthians 12:12-27. As you read the passage and a body part is mentioned (foot, hand, ear, eye, or head), pause and allow each person to write the word on a separate post-it. When you have finished the passage have everyone turn their post-its over. You can then go around and pick one random post-it from each person, placing it on their forehead. Give them one minute, in total silence, to work out who they are and team up with one other person to create the most useful combination of body parts. Highlight the fact that the best pairings are the ones with the greatest difference between partners (e.g. head and hand, foot and eye). Teaming up with the identical body part just seems a bit of a waste.

### The big idea

10 minutes

Bring the session back to what Paul's describing in the passage: the Church as a collection of different individuals, each with their own tastes and talents. It's that difference which makes us what we are supposed to be: a family, united to serve God in the world. Give each person a pen and piece of paper. Use the following prompts to help them create a map of their relationships:

1. Draw a circle in the centre of your paper to represent you.
2. Next, draw other circles around your central circle to represent each person in your family. If you feel close to them, draw their circle close to your central circle. If you feel a little more distant from them, draw their circle further away. Think about the ways in which they have been a good influence on your life.
3. Now do the same for your friends.
4. Think about any other people who have made a big (and positive) impact on your life - maybe people you encountered at school, university or work, your wider family or neighbourhood. If you've not already drawn a circle for them, do it now.
5. Finally, pick the five people who have made the biggest, and best, impact on you. It might be that they are kind, encouraging, wise or just fun.

Now give people a few minutes get into pairs and explain their map to each other.

Obviously, for some this exercise will be easier than others. Make sure that you are sensitive in the way you present this material and offer help and support wherever needed. If people are struggling, encourage them to think about best friends, exceptional teachers and friendly relatives.

### Questions

5 minutes

Encourage everyone to think about the five people they've selected (although you can be as flexible as you like on the number).

1. What are the first specific examples you think of when you remember how these people encouraged you?
2. Now think a little harder: what did these people do to help you that you didn't see at the time? Did

they go without and make personal sacrifices? Take time to talk it through with a friend and see what you can discover.

3. What's the best example you've seen in the last week of someone being kind to someone you love? How did it make your friend feel?
4. Can you see God at work in any of these examples?

### It's over to you

10 minutes

By now the people in your group should have lots of good ideas floating around about kindness and generosity: memories of what people have done for them, practical examples of things that have really helped, thoughts on the impact that a little bit of help can make to a person. Encourage everyone to think of things that they could do to show their appreciation of a few individuals. Get people to look back at their relationship map to help them consider who they want to do something for. It might be the five significant people they picked out earlier, or perhaps an entirely different set of people.

Invite people to share some of the things they would like to do, including some smaller and some bigger acts, as well as some that are public and other that are entirely anonymous.

### Conclusion

5 minutes

Bring the session back to the words of Paul which we started with. Remind people that we are meant to work together in spite of (and because of) our differences. Remind people of the ways in which others have helped them and the many ways in which God has helped them through others. What might God have in store for the people in your group and the communities of which they are a part? How might the kindness, generosity and sacrifice of each person in the room be used by God? Leave people feeling excited about the prospect of them joining in the great work of God by simply helping others.



## Pray

5 minutes

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Father God, you know this body that we call the Church, and you see all the different parts. You see who each of us are and how each of us can play a part. Thank you for making room for each of us, for giving everyone in this room a part to play.

We know that you are generous, God. You are kind and you sacrificed everything to save us. Help each of us to follow your footsteps and show kindness, generosity and sacrifice to others as well.

We are sorry for the times when we have not treated others the way that we should. Please forgive us for the things we have done wrong and the right things that we failed to do. May your Holy Spirit guide us, nudge us, prompt us and empower us to do the things that make you smile.

Amen

### This weeks 40acts

**Monday 4 March:** Surprise someone

**Tuesday 5 March:** Encourage

**Wednesday 6 March:** Hug

**Thursday 7 March:** Smile

**Friday 8 March:** Say thank you

**Saturday 9 March:** Love your church

*Visit [4oacts.org.uk](http://4oacts.org.uk) to find out more about 4oacts and to sign up to daily challenges during Lent 2013.*

→ **The aim**

To think creatively about our potential to effect change.

→ **Preparation**

Packs of playing cards, assortment of stationary items (e.g. elastic bands, paper clips, blutack. One sheet of paper and pen for each person.

**Activity**

10 minutes

Start with the challenge; divide people into groups of three and give them a pack of cards each and an assortment of elastic bands, paper clips and blutack. Ask them to build the highest tower they can in five minutes; it's up to them how they construct it. When the time's up, judge which is the highest, most stable construction.

**Talking point**

5 minutes

Discuss the challenge: what went well and where did things go wrong? How did each group get round the difficulties?

In life there are times when we all feel as though we don't quite have what it takes. And yet we are often more resourceful than we think we are. Ask people to remember (and talking about it if they are comfortable doing so) a time when they surprised themselves by doing something they thought was impossible.

**Read**

10 minutes

Esther understood this idea of feeling a little out of her depth. Remind people of the story:

- King Xerxes is the supreme leader who controls everything. (1:1-4)
- He embarks on a week-long drinking binge. (1:10-12)
- Esther is an orphan, an alien, a concubine and a woman whose true identity has had to be hidden. (2:5-7)
- Esther's character is strong; she refuses to give in to the luxuries on offer. Instead she remains focused and aware of her place in the scheme of things. (2:13)
- Mordecai is Esther's cousin while

Haman is most likely a member of a race with a long history of hatred towards the Jews. Haman wants to exterminate all Jews on a single day and puts the plans for this genocide into law.

Read Esther chapter four.

**Questions**

5 minutes

1. What is significant about the fact that Mordecai tears his clothes and grieves in 4:1?
2. Why does Esther initially send her uncle new clothes to wear instead of his torn, grief-advertising outfit? Do you think she is trying to disguise his Jewishness in a hope of keeping him safe? If so, do you think she's right?
3. Esther 4:12-14 is the most famous part of the whole book. How does Mordecai respond to Esther's plan to have him cover up?
4. How does Esther then respond? Do you see that by choosing three days of prayer and fasting followed by efficient, inspired and effective action? Esther knows the value of being on both her knees and her feet, of praying as well as acting.

**The big idea**

5 minutes

The story of Esther is a brilliant, inspiring one, especially as there are plenty of parallels between us and Esther. She's surrounded by injustice and there's a clear need that she can see. She's a little scared at first - perhaps unsure whether she really can make a difference - but with a little encouragement and wisdom she prays and acts.

How are we like Esther, the heroine who saves the day? Isn't that a bit ambitious? We might not all be surrounded by the threat of imminent danger, but we can all make good choices within the situations we find ourselves in - just like Esther. She prayed, she stuck to her beliefs and served God faithfully right where she was - even though Xerxes was a dangerous man.

Now introduce this verse:

*'For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of*

*the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.'* 2 Corinthians 4:5-9

**It's over to you**

5 minutes

What choices might people face over the next 24 hours? What does it mean for us to be the light shining in darkness and treasure-holding jars of clay? Surely we will all face the choice of how to talk to people who hurt us, whether to be generous with those who have less, to be the first one to forgive, to show love and joy to others, to side with those on the margins.

Remind people of Mordecai's response. Hand out paper and pens, one per person and give people time to think about the good choices they can make over the coming days.

Encourage the group to copy out 2 Corinthians 4:5-9 onto their paper - taking them home and putting them somewhere prominent in their room.

**Conclusion**

5 minutes

None of us are qualified to be used by God - how could we be? We mess up so much of the time. Yet that's the point: we don't earn God's love and favour, instead it's a free gift. He's the star of the show, He's the main attraction, He's the one who brings the transformation to lives of those who so desperately need it. Our job is to make ourselves available to be used as He directs. Our job is simply to make the right choices - the ones that show His love and share His good news.

Stand in a circle and encourage people to take a look around the group and picture each person's friends, family and chance-encounters standing behind them. Think about all those lives just waiting to be touched by God. Think about all that potential for change that could flow out from here. And all we have to do is choose to say yes when God gives us an opportunity to serve. Exciting, isn't it?

## Pray

5 minutes

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Father God, we get scared and we get shy. Too often we fail to say or do the things that we know we should do. We are sorry for all these times and ask you to forgive us.

Thank you that even though we might feel as though we haven't got everything that we need, we're wrong! With your Holy Spirit leading us we've got all that we need. So send us out this week, God. Send us to the people that need to know you more, show us the simple acts of kindness and good choices that we can make which will be of use to you.

### This weeks 40acts

**Monday 11 March:** Clear out your wardrobe

**Tuesday 12 March:** Take someone new

**Wednesday 13 March:** Share a good joke

**Thursday 14 March:** Go screen-free

**Friday 15 March:** Make something

**Saturday 16 March:** Let them choose

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## WEEK 6

Love your world

### → The aim

To see that all of creation has God's fingerprints on it and prepare to make changes to our lifestyle as a result.

### → Preparation

You will need a laptop to show the Tearfund video 'Hope on the Horizon: Climate Change and Hunger' (search for it on YouTube - it's pretty easy to find), pens and a large sheet of paper.

### Activity

15 minutes

Ask people to bring in a reminder (a photo or memento) of their favourite outdoor experience. Take it in turns for people to describe their item and the experience it reminds them of. Ask them to share in what ways they feel closer to God when they are outdoors.

### Talking point

5 minutes

Should Christians care about the environment? Divide into two groups and have one half list all the reasons why we should, and the other half list the reasons why we should not. Have both groups feed back and discuss.

### Watch

5 minutes

Read this before the meeting:  
*Since the industrial revolution began more than 150 years ago the average global surface temperature has risen by 0.76 °C, with much of that rise happening in the last 40 years. The links are obvious: the more coal and oil we've been burning to generate electricity and power our technologically-advanced lifestyle, the more carbon has been emitted, trapping heat in the atmosphere and causing global temperatures to rise. That's why scientists agree that man-made climate change is real - and dangerous.*

*If our emissions do not change then average global temperatures could rise by 2-3°C in the next 50 years. This time next century our great grandchildren will be looking back on a 5-6°C rise and living in a world plunged into a chaos of cinematic*

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*proportions.*

*There is a very real danger that once temperatures rise 2°C above the average a staggering 4 billion people could be left facing water shortages. Agriculture could be a not-so-distant memory in places like the tropics, while millions more will be left hungry. In Africa the result of this rise could be that between 40 and 60 million more people will find themselves exposed to malaria. The risk of melting ice sheets in Greenland and the West Antarctic rises significantly. Floods and droughts will become more extreme and more widespread, leaving those that are the most vulnerable on the planet with even less hope of survival.*

*It is the poor who are worst affected by all this. Water shortages are a common result of climate change, meaning that women and girls end up facing increased hardship since fetching water is generally considered to be a female duty. And while some farmers have benefited from climate change by being able to grow new crops, those who live in the world's harshest environments have not experienced such luxuries.*

Show 'Hope on the Horizon: Climate Change and Hunger'. The final section that discusses shipping taxes is slightly less relevant to this session, but the first minute and a half are a good introduction to the ways that climate change impact the poor.

### Questions

5 minutes

There is a lot of debate around the subject of climate change. Politicians, journalists and even teachers seem to be talking about it a lot. But it's not just a political issue - it's a theological one. Why? Because the way we treat the environment has a lot to say about the way we feel about God.

Suggest volunteers look up and read out these verses. Discuss your responses to the questions.

1. Matthew 10:29, Psalm 65 - How does God feel about His creation?
2. Psalm 139:13-15 - What kind of care did God take in creating us?
3. Psalm 97:1, Psalm 98:7-8 - What does creation tell us about God?
4. Jeremiah 10:12-13, Colossians 1:16-17 - If we were made in God's image what can we learn from the way God treats creation?
5. 1 John 3:16-18, Ezekiel 34:16 - Who suffers most when the

climate changes? It's the poor. So does it matter that the climate is changing? What do you think these verses suggest?

### It's over to you

10 minutes

Get your pens and paper out and compile a list of the things that could be done to help show a better care for God's creation. Here are a few for starters:

#### 1. Go Veggie

Encourage your church to have a meat-free day! If everyone in the UK gave up meat once a week, the emissions savings would equal taking 5 million cars off the road.

#### 2. Tech Fast

Have a technology fast. Try a day with no TV, no iPod, no computer, and even no mobile. Why not set aside a technology fast day each month?

#### 3. Bottle It

Use tap water rather than more carbon-intensive bottled water when you can. Invest in a non-plastic water bottle instead and give away the money you'll save.

How many more ideas can you come up with?

### Conclusion

5 minutes

God didn't just create a home for us in the same way that we might shove a bit of sawdust in an old shoebox in order to look after a hamster. God created this earth with love and care, filling it with an infinite number of amazing things which all reflect back His care and creativity. This planet of ours is not even ours - it's His, and He loves it. Shouldn't we take better care of it?

### Pray

5 minutes

Father God, we have made so many mistakes. We have all treated this planet with less care and love that it deserves. Please forgive us and show us the right way to live. It can be confusing at times - we are surrounded by so much technology and things to consume - but we need to learn to find our happiness first of all in you. Show us how to do that and to find the brightest, fullest, most amazing way of living there is: with you at the centre. Amen

## **This weeks 40acts**

**Monday 18 March:** Have a car-free day

**Tuesday 19 March:** Donate blood

**Wednesday 20 March:** Listen

**Thursday 21 March:** Say no to plastic

**Friday 22 March:** Use your influence

**Saturday 23 March:** Plant a tree

*Visit [4oacts.org.uk](http://4oacts.org.uk) to find out more about 4oacts and to sign up to daily challenges during Lent 2013.*

## WEEK 7

Do hard things

### → The aim

To prepare to take risks for God.

### → Preparation

You will need a laptop, plus enough writing paper, pens and envelopes for each person in the group.

### Activity

5 minutes

Search YouTube with the words Four Yorkshiremen and watch the classic Monty Python sketch that takes a comedic look at the nature of suffering and childhood hardship.

### Talking point

5 minutes

What do we do when things get tough? Brainstorm the ways in which the members of your group react when life stops going according to plan. As you talk, ask people which responses they feel are healthy and which are less so.

### Read

5 minutes

Remind people of the story of Job - the wealth, the status, the faith, the tragedy and incredible suffering followed by the friends who just couldn't seem to get it right. Ask people why they think that Job gets singled out for such special treatment. Take a minute to see what possible reasons you can come up with. Read Job 29:7-17. This is where we find Job musing over his past actions. Help people to see that verses 12 to 17 offer us a brilliant list of the characteristics of a true God-follower. God chose Job not because of his wealth but because of the choices he made to live in ways that helped others.

### The big idea

5 minutes

It is easy to trust God when things are going well, but it is far harder to do it when the troubles are mounting up around us. Job shows that there is a clear way of learning how to be a

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better follower of God - the sort who is well equipped to hang in there when life gets tough - and that's through living graciously, generously, kindly and with an eye open for those on the edges of society. And isn't that exactly what Jesus did? God's own son lived his life in view of the poor – not hidden away among the trappings of wealth. When it came time for him to face suffering, he was ready.

### Questions

10 minutes

What kind of Christians do people in the group want to be? Talk about any people in your church community that you look up to. What is it about the way they live out their faith that people admire?

Suggest reading out the following: Jeremiah 9:23-24, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Can people think of examples of people they know today who put these verses into action?

What steps are people going to take to get there? What opportunities are at hand for your people to show God's love practically and sacrificially? Introduce the 40acts for this week: speaking about faith, praying for change, serving others, telling people our story and forgiving others. Encourage people to think about ways in which they might be able to put each of those into action. Are there people or situations which immediately spring to mind?

### It's over to you

5 minutes

Encourage people to think of ways in which they would like to serve God. Hand out writing paper, envelopes and pens and suggest they write a letter to themselves. Explain that the letters should be an encouragement to keep going in hard times, to remember to serve and love others as Jesus showed us and to trust God to be there for them.

### Conclusion

10 minutes

Take time to be still and quiet. Encourage people get into pairs or threes, to talk about what kind of Christian they would like to be and to take it in turns to pray and ask God to speak to them.

### Pray

5 minutes

Father God. We have so much to learn and so little to teach. Yet you still choose to use and work with us, to allow us to be your partners even though we are so unqualified. We are sorry for the times when we have simply given up on you because things become too hard. Please forgive us.

Help us to learn more about you with every day that passes. We would love to be the kind of Christian who knows you so well that when hard times come our faith doesn't skip a beat. Show us how to get there God: starting right now. Amen.

### This weeks 40 acts

**Monday 25 March:** Stand up, stand out

**Tuesday 26 March:** Pray

**Wednesday 27 March:** Go beyond yourself

**Thursday 28 March:** Practise your testimony

**Friday 29 March:** Forgive

**Saturday 30 March:** Overcome your story

Visit [40acts.org.uk](http://40acts.org.uk) to find out more about 40acts and to sign up to daily challenges during Lent 2013.

## Acknowledgements

### Author

Craig Borlase is a freelance writer living in Reading. He has written numerous books and bible study series. He free-lanced for Tearfund for 10 years. Before that he was an English teacher and ghost writer.

### About Stewardship

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