

Season of Creation

Small group material week 5: need not greed

1. Welcome

Welcome everybody to your group. Are there specific needs that should be prayed for? Have you been able to make changes in your life to save water / electricity / to be kinder to the environment?

2. Lifestyle and video input

Cut out some adverts from newspapers and magazines. Make sure you include fashions, electronic goods, etc. Pass the ads around the groups, and watch the video clip, then discuss the following questions:

What lifestyle are these adverts selling?

What are the differences between the world young people are growing up in today, and the world that you (or the previous generation) grew up in? What is the 'modern lifestyle' to which people aspire today?

Read the following passages: Matthew 6:19-21, 25-31; 7:7-12; 8:20; 10:29-31

How would you describe a 'Jesus lifestyle'?

3. Simple living

Our faith today calls us to simple living. Discuss the following reading by Sean McDonagh, in [The Death of Life](#). The Columba Press, Blackrock, 2004.

"It is obvious that if future generations are to share in a planet as beautiful and fertile as the one this generation shares, we will have to live more simply. All religious traditions have encouraged their followers to live in a simple way and not to become attached to either power or money, because these have a way of diverting our hearts from what is most important in life. This call for moderation in our lifestyle is particularly significant today. It arises from the simple fact that the majority of people will not be able to meet their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter as a small segment of humans sequester the lion's share of the earth's resources. Furthermore, such a way of living is impairing the ability of the planet to sustain future generations at a level that they will need to meet their basic needs. So the Christian challenge to promote moderation today arises from concerns for social justice and the integrity of God's creation."

- How can I as an individual live more simply so that others may simply live?
- How can we as a congregation live more simply?

4. Money

Consider 1 Timothy 6:10 "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil," Matthew 6:24 "You cannot serve both God and money" and this quotation from Resurgence Magazine (Kumar, S. 2006. www.resurgence.org)

"Money is not wealth. True wealth is good land, healthy animals, flourishing forests, clean water, honest work, abundant creativity and human imagination. Money was designed to oil the wheels of economic interaction and to ensure that the workings of the market place were smooth and simple.

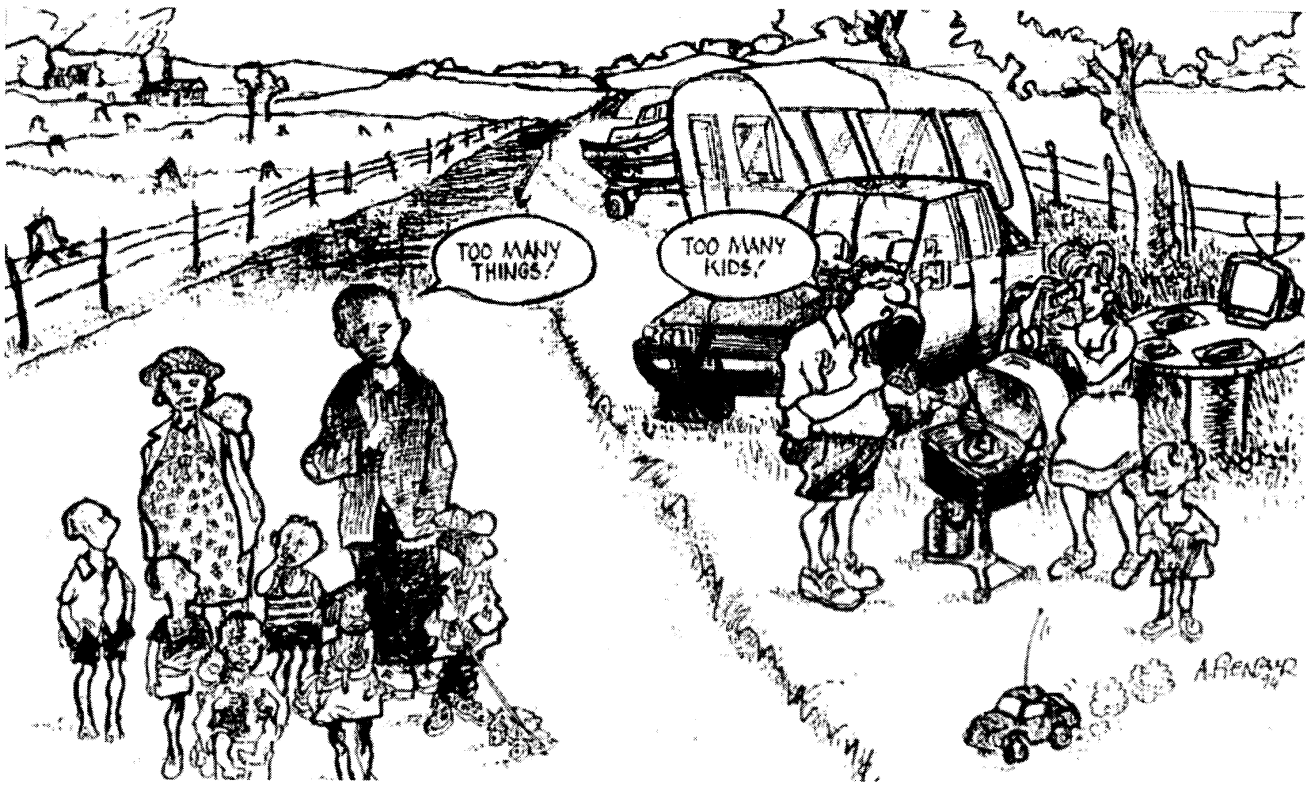
The purpose of money was and should be to serve the human community as well as the earth community, but now people and planet are put into the service of money. Natural resources are converted into consumables to make money. Whether these consumer goods are necessary or not is irrelevant.

Money favours power and power favours money. Modern 'democracy' in most countries, is the government of the rich, for the rich and by the rich. Money is not a God-given fixture: it was designed by us, therefore it can be changed by us. Unless we reform and redesign our money system the idea of sustainability, social justice and spiritual renewal will remain a mirage."

- What challenges do these bible verses and this quote leave us with?

5. Causes of poverty

Consider the drawing on the following page. Which has the greatest impact on the natural environment — population growth or over-consumption, given that a child in the 'developed west' will use 50 times more energy than a person in a developing country, but at the same time the world is running out of food, with the world's population increasing by one billion people in 15 years?



6. Closing prayer

Consider this prayer carefully as a group before you pray it.

A FRANCISCAN BLESSING

(from Yancey, P. Prayer: does it make a difference? Hodder and Stoughton, London, 2006.)

May you be blessed with discomfort
at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships
so that you may live deep within your heart.

May you be blessed with anger
at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May you be blessed with tears
to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war
so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness
to believe that you can make a difference in the world
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done
to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

7. Next week

Is our closing week in the sermon series, and we will be looking at the issue of how we can care more fully for the world in which we live. Think about what you (and we) can do practically.