



Bible Study: Plastic in God's oceans

There is hardly a place in the oceans and seas today where one cannot see the impact of humanity. Our obsession with easy, single-use plastics has become a plague for the planet, and the oceans and its inhabitants are suffering. As scientists uncover more alarming potential impacts on ocean and therefore human health and more pressure is executed by environmental groups to reduce plastic waste, many narratives are circulating. "If we all do our part, the oceans can be clean again" or even "it's too big of a problem: there's nothing we can do about it". As Christians we seek a Biblical narrative to guide our thinking on these issues which encourages hope in Jesus Christ. This Bible study is a tool for individuals or groups who want to uncover God's plans for his oceans and tune in to this hope-filled narrative.

SECTION 1: God's purpose for his oceans

Read Genesis 1

- What words are used to describe the creation of sea creatures in verses 20–23? Compare with Psalm 104:24–25.
- What picture does this bring to your mind? Describe it or perhaps even draw it.
- Did you notice in Verse 22 that God blessed the living creatures of the sea? What might this mean?
- What does this passage tell us about how God intended the sea to function?
- What words would you use to describe the state of living creatures in the sea right now?

SECTION 2: God's purpose for man's relationship with the ocean

- In Gen 1:26–30, what words and phrases are used to describe the creation of people?
- What do the phrases "in His image" and "have dominion over" mean? How do you think they are inter-related?
- What are the implications for how we treat the oceans and the earth's resources today?
- How do you treat the oceans today? How can you work towards Gen 1:20–23?





SECTION 3: The oceans suffering

Reflection on the state of the oceans today: *For this section, watch one of the videos in the "Media" section of the Microplastics toolbox, or read one of the microplastics factsheets. What did you learn about plastic pollution in the oceans. In your web browser, search on "plastic ocean" How do these photos of the oceans filled with plastic compare to the image of the ocean "teeming with life" seen in Gen 1:20–23?*

Read Hosea 4:1–3

- What is the source of our earth's problems according to Hosea?
- How does the way we use and dispose of plastic reflect how we think about God?

SECTION 4: Hope in Jesus Christ

- Are you hopeful about the state of our oceans? Why or why not?
- Does what we hear from media about plastic pollution encourage hope? If so, what does it encourage us to put our hope in?

Read Romans 8:18–25 and Colossians 1:19–20

- How do these passages give us hope for the oceans?
- How does the message of hope in Jesus as the saviour of the world compare to other narratives discussed earlier?
- What is one thing I can change in how I treat the oceans to honour the Creator God and live out my hope in Jesus? (Lots of ideas in the toolbox!)

Pray for the oceans

Here are some ideas of how you can pray for the oceans as a group:

- Use the "prayer for the oceans" document available in the Microplastic Toolbox
- Encourage each person to say one thing they are thankful for about the oceans, one thing they are sorry for, and one thing they believe God will do for the ocean
- Use your browser to search for images of the ocean that reflect Gen 1:20–23. Use these to fuel hopeful prayers.

