

Agents of Hope

Facilitator's Guide

Children taking care of God's creation



energy.
water
air
garden waste
living creatures
new heaven & earth

Agents *of* Hope

SUN
SOUTH AFRICA

Agents *of* Hope

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Scripture Union is an international Christian charity working with churches in more than 130 countries, providing resources to bring the good news about Jesus to children, young people and families and encouraging them to develop spiritually through the Bible and prayer.

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About this tool:

Thank you for choosing this tool! We trust that as you use it with your group of young people, you will find it simple and effective as a basis from which to run effective sessions.

SU believes that Christians – and young Christians – should be taking the lead in Christian stewardship of creation and can be highly effective “agents of hope” through doing this. We hope your commitment to enabling / enthusing these agents will bear much fruit!

This tool is aimed at young people in the 9-12 age group. It can be run at virtually any venue, but access to outdoors / gardens is important. As facilitator, you do not need to be a highly qualified environmentalist, but do need a passion for God’s creation and how young people can be involved in caring for creation. Owing to the relatively short and simple sessions, we intend it to be used in settings such as camps, holiday clubs, “Sunday School classes”, school Christian groups, youth groups or extra-mural clubs.

SU is concerned about impact and what the outcomes will be for your young people – so we’ve included a basic evaluation form at the end. We also value your feedback as facilitator.

We acknowledge up front that we’ve drawn material from various (far more qualified) sources and have sought to acknowledge these sources faithfully. If we have unwittingly neglected to credit a source, we apologise and will rectify this in future editions. Our intention is to direct attention to these fantastic online resources, not to claim them as ours nor profit in any way from them.

We are aiming at minimal paper usage, hence having this resource on CD format. We encourage you to use recycled materials as far as possible in your experiential activities.

This course can be made longer or shorter depending on the time you have and setting you are using. Activities have been suggested to constitute a basic 40-minute session, but can be chosen according to the length of the session; good preparation is encouraged and addition of further experiential activities.

Thank you, oh facilitator of Agents of Hope! Have fun!



Introduction:

Should Christians be concerned with environmental issues, if God is going to destroy everything anyway and we will be taken away to heaven at some point? Should we play a role at all, if we are to focus on spiritual things? We encourage you, as a facilitator and enabler of young people, to use this tool to challenge your own understanding of scripture and to be open to God to lead you in this.

Everything which God has made – his creation – reveals his glory. When we look at anything within the universe, it should be evident that a wonderfully creative God has made it! People are part of God's creation and we should thank God continually that he has given us life. We are not self-sufficient beings and we cannot exist without God's life giving gifts.

The biggest sin people commit is that we are proud and we think we do not need God! In his wisdom, God has placed us in a complex environment that should make us realise our dependency on him and be grateful because without his providence we would simply not survive. We are also dependent on the other elements God created and we should play a leading role in looking after these. Our actions can affect creation. When we choose God's way, then we are able to take care of his good creation. Selfishness usually has bad consequences for creation and these will be highlighted.

The surprising thing for many of us is that God may have much bigger dreams for his creation than we imagined... We encourage you to consider afresh what concepts like new heaven earth may involve – and what our role as Christians may be as agents of hope for the transformation we should expect and long for... We encourage you to wrestle afresh with passages like Romans 8:19: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed".

Consider passages such as Mark 16:15: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation". Have you noticed that it does not say, "...preach the good news to people only"... What does this actually mean? In this course we hope to explore this mystery a little further. Our hope is that we will see children walking with Jesus, enjoying the wonder and beauty of God's creation and thriving on their responsibility to work the land and take care of it ... while he makes all things new.

This tool explores 6 parts of the created order and reflects on how God uses each of these aspects of the physical creation as a demonstration of his life-giving nature.

Finally we will look at the future hope to which God has called us. We will see how our actions can bring hope as we anticipate the glorious future we have. We look forward to the day when Christ fills us to the measure of all the fullness of God, when we become like him in every way and he makes all things new under his Lordship.

*Agents
of
Hope*

Facilitating Tips

Thank you for taking the courage to get hold of this tool and take it to young people. This is an incredible opportunity and you stand at the threshold of a great time... These tips will help you make the most of the sessions – we trust you'll take them to heart.

1. Facilitating

We are facilitators, not teachers. Our aim is to get learners doing, thinking, laughing, participating and discussing, far more than merely listening passively. A hallmark of SU's activities is fun, so please go out of your way to make each session as fun as possible.

2. Preparing

It's critical to prepare creatively before each session. Ideally you should find the best way possible of achieving the outcomes of the session. This will involve fresh, creative, divergent thinking. We urge you to prepare magnificently. Before each session, have a clear plan of your session and how you will use your mix of activities. Our effectiveness in facilitating is determined before the lesson starts. Critical for learning is asking the right questions: this causes learners to reflect on their own experiences and values, encouraging them to arrive at their own solutions.

3. Being sensitive

In SU's view, these topics are presented from a theological standpoint that is fairly innovative, yet true to scripture. It is quite possible that you and your learners may have a standpoint that varies from ours. We encourage you to explore your own foundational interpretations and also to be sensitive to views that your learners may have. As this is innovative material, it may well challenge understandings. We urge you to deal with sessions sensitively, rather than technically. Young people do not care how much we know until they know how much we care... Take time to build your connection with each young person, finding ways of building rapport with each one.

You may have participants who are not Christian nor come from a Christian background. Great sensitivity will be required in ensuring that they can participate, particularly when introduced to scriptural passages.

4. Organising groups

We urge you to utilise small groups whenever possible. If you have a large group, try breaking them into groups of 8, having 1 volunteer leader for each group. Having small groups encourages discussion, participation, inclusion of shyer participants and group cohesion. Remember the dynamics of the effective small group:

- Everyone sitting in a circle;
- Close enough to facilitate good communication;
- On the same level (physical positioning);
- Establishment of agreed group rules;
- Electing of a group leader, in case volunteer group leaders are not present.

5. Asking questions

Here are some question-asking techniques:

- Ask open-ended questions (trying to avoid yes / no questions);
- Address people by name;
- Draw things out of people – ask for further explanation, clarification. Use questions like: "What do you mean?" and "Why did you say that?"
- Use clarifying statements or questions, such as: "How did that make you feel" and "What I think I am hearing you saying is that..."
- Gauge group consensus / understanding, as in: "Does everyone feel the same?"
- Always applaud vulnerability in their speaking.

6. *Beating boredom*

Try and steer clear of the chalk-and-talk method. Each session can be worked out differently, using discussion in pairs, small groups or the whole class. More fun activities like scenarios, dramas, role plays, questionnaires and games can be used. It's important not to exceed the recommended time of each activity. It's better to end with learners wanting to do more than to exhaust each topic. Keep moving: as facilitators, we are pacemakers.

7. *Opening up*

Learners will open up about their own experiences and feelings to the same extent that you are transparent yourself. More is caught than can be taught. We cannot expect learners to adopt positive, value-based principles to live by if we do not live by them ourselves.

8. *Being purposeful*

Each module has a clear purpose. Make sure this is understood. It must come out very clearly in your introduction and wrapping up. If the learner forgets everything other than the key purpose, that's OK!

Have fun, and may you learn as much as your participants do.

May this be a journey you enjoy together!

Navigation Tips

Each session consists of the following:

A. For the Facilitator:

- Background - an introduction for the facilitator
- Sources - interesting resources and books relating to session
- Outcome / Lesson Aim - short summary of intended main outcome
- Spiritual theme - explanation of main spiritual theme
- Bible passage - main Bible passage
- Outline of session - outline of session with break-down of time
Facilitators are to set up as time allows, but a basic session is:
 - Way in - 5 min
 - Experience - 15 min
 - Discuss - 10 min
 - Wrap - 5 min
 - Reflect and act - 5 min

B. The session in action

1. Way in - a brief quote, song, game or question to set the tone
2. Experience - an experience from which discussion flows
3. Discuss - best in small groups, but suitable for larger groups too
4. Wrap - an object lesson, summary or clear challenge
5. Reflect and act - summary and challenge to action (may involve a project/homework)



SESSION ONE - energy

Genesis 1:1-5 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day", and the darkness he called "night" and there was evening and there was morning – the first day.

A. For the Facilitator:

Background

This session will enable you to explore the concept of energy with young people – what it is, what its source is and our response to energy utilisation.

God created everything perfect for life on earth. He achieved this through his words / commands. Energy is part of this. While people cannot see energy, they can see what energy does. Energy cannot be destroyed; it simply moves from one form to another. Every object, whether living or inanimate, is held together with God's energy. God is the source of life and people can only utilise what they are given. They cannot create something out of nothing.

It will be possible to explore the role of various persons of the Trinity through this session: Christ (the mystery of Christ's life in us); God the Father (creator, God is light) and the Holy Spirit (God's power through us). God's light and his love are to sustain us and shine through us.

Further applications of light and hope for young people will be possible. People are tempted to think that we can sustain ourselves, but surrendering to his life-giving power is the only way to real life. He gives us all the energy of heaven through the Holy Spirit.

Word connotations:

- Xhosa – "Umbane" means, lightning, electricity or energy
- Zulu – "Amandla" means, strength, power, force, might, authority
- Afrikaans – "Energie, krag"
- Ancient Greek – ἐνέργεια *energeia* means activity, operation

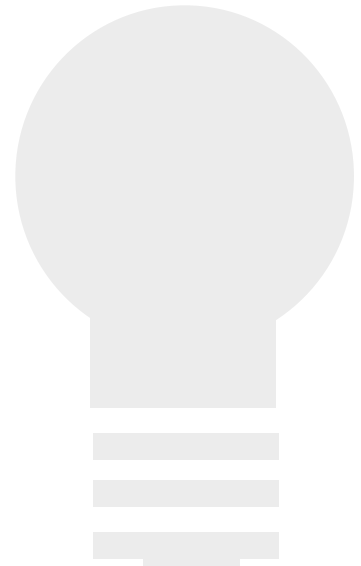
Definitions:

Wikipedia: Energy is an indirectly observed quantity. It is often understood as the ability a physical system has to do work on other physical systems

Andrew Zimmerman Jones: Energy is the capacity of a physical system to perform work.

Sources:

- www.kidsesdb.bg
- www.eschooltoday.com
- www.tiki.oneworld.net
- www.kids.nationalgeographic.com
- www.cefgroup.co.za
- www.capetown.gov.za/en/Environmentalresources



Outcome / Lesson Aim

Participants are to explore the connection between God and energy. God created and sustains everything through his power. Participants should commit to conserve and re-use the energy God supplies.

Spiritual theme

God created and sustains everything. He sustains creation with his power (energy). All things are dependent on God's energy for their existence.

Key Bible passage

Colossians 1:16-17; 27; 29: "All things were created by him and for him... in him all things hold together."

(Other passages include: Gen 1:3; Ps 89:17; Rom 11:36; Heb 1:3; Rev 4:11.)

B. The Energy session in action

1. Way in

Use a fun song, like "I'm alive, awake, well, enthusiastic" or any other movement song that your children enjoy.

Take a picture of a solar panel: what is this and why do we use it?

Brainstorm the word "energy". What is energy? (the ability to do work: it can be neither created nor destroyed)

Need: Picture of solar panel; white board or large paper; whiteboard markers/pens.



2. Experience

Take your group outdoors.

OPTION 1: Using the sun's energy, allow children to burn paper with a magnifying glass (or demonstrate it to younger children).

Need: magnifying glass, paper, water or a bucket of sand to put out smouldering paper.



Did you know? The sun's power is being increased by reflecting the rays through the glass which means many rays of sun are being focussed onto a small area and they are strong enough to cause fire.

Or:

OPTION 2: Fun with gravity: Attach a piece of string to a small can; half fill the can with water. In an outside area swing the can around your head very quickly.

Need: a small can like a jam tin with two holes near the top to hold the string; string and water.

Did you know: the planets in our solar system are kept in place by gravity? The further the planet is from the sun, the longer it takes to travel (orbit) around the sun. One trip on earth around the sun is equal to a year.

Or:

OPTION 3: Launch a mini rocket: Place bicarbonate of soda on the middle of a paper tissue. Roll up the tissue and twist the ends so that the bicarbonate of soda stays inside. Pour water and vinegar into the bottle. Have the cork ready... drop the tissue into the bottle and quickly push in the cork.... Stand well away and watch.

Need: a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda; paper tissue; 1/2 cup of water; 1/2 cup of vinegar; cork that fits into a bottle (like a coke 2l- plastic or glass)

Did you know, the chemical reaction (energy exchange) between vinegar and bicarbonate of soda, produces carbon dioxide gas? The pressure inside the bottle pushes against the cork.

3. Discuss

Ask where the energy came from for the experience you chose? (sun; movement; chemical reaction)
Who supplied the energy?
Can people generate their own energy out of nothing?

Bring in a vegetable like a cabbage, spinach, apple, grapes or whatever is in season – preferably with leaves still on it. This food item is energy for us (we eat it and it gives us energy to do our work / play) – don't eat it yet ☺

Where did that energy come from to make this?

The sun's energy is stored in the form of Carbon through the process of photosynthesis. This is a chemical reaction between the sun's light energy, water and the green stuff in leaves.

Where did the sun's energy come from?

God Spoke!

Read Colossians 1:16-29 and discuss

"For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together."

V27: To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

v29; To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Who created everything?

For whom were all things made?

Who keeps everything together?

What is the mystery in v 27?

Who will give us the energy we need to proclaim his gospel?

Going deeper:

Delve into Consumerism and its consequences. (Find the 20 minute DVD on the Cape Town website www.capetown.gov.za/en/Environmentalresources regarding consumerism and how much stuff we use and the impact on the environment.)

4. Wrap

Where should we ask for God's power to be? Answer: in our inner being!

Discuss energy which is generated by people (electricity; battery power; fire; fuel- nuclear, atomic, petrol, rocket fuel etc)

How is it generated? And what burden does it place on God's creation?

How can we nurture what we have been given to use?

5. Reflect and act

Give hand-out: "Energy saving tips" (see next page)

Plant a bean:

Need: tins or yogurt cups; beans for each child, cotton wool or soil.

To do: decorate tin/yogurt cup if appropriate – could wind wool around it; paint it or stick pictures onto it.

Place soil or cotton wool into the container.

Bury the bean (s) into the soil/cotton wool.

Water it.

Discuss how to keep it alive and encourage growth. It needs sunlight daily and water, but not too much.

Discuss how the energy from the sun will eventually bring about energy in their bodies if their beans produce fruit.

Pray

Prayer ideas may include:

How can I best shine your light to the world?

What did you mean when you said I mustn't hide my light under a bush?

Fill me with your light, Lord.

Help me to look after the energy sources in the world.

Help us to be good stewards of your energy.

Energy Saving Tips (from Cape Town City Council)

Currently over 90% of our energy in South Africa comes from non-renewable resources like coal, oil and gas that will eventually run out. The less energy we use, the longer these resources will last and a lower demand for energy will have beneficial effects on the environment.

1. Save electricity:

- Switch off! If you're not using it, switch it off at the plug (see interesting facts below)
- Encourage Mom to buy energy efficient light bulbs.
- Don't leave the fridge door open. Go in and out as quickly as possible.
- Boil a small amount of water for your drink. Don't fill the kettle if you only want a cup.
- Put on a jersey rather than a heater; or pull up a blanket.

2. Save petrol:

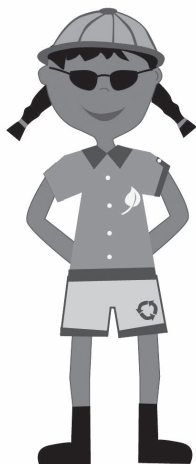
- Use your bike or walk; public transport also cuts down on the use of petrol.
- Buy locally. Support your local shops and cut the driving.

3. Recycle:

- Reduce, reuse and recycle. Do you know what your carbon footprint is?

? *Interesting facts: Did you know?*

- Leaving a computer monitor on overnight wastes as much energy as making 800 A4 photocopies!
- Lighting an empty room overnight can waste enough energy to make 1000 cups of tea!
- TVs, DVDs and video machines left on 'Stand-By' continue to use at least half the amount of electricity they use when they are turned on!
- Overfilling an electric kettle can waste enough energy to run a TV set for 26 hours!
- Recycling 1 ton of paper (400 reams) saves 15 trees, 2.5 barrels of oil, 4132kWh of electricity, 2.26m³ of landfill space, 31319 gallons of water and prevents 26.8kg of air pollutants from reaching the atmosphere!
- Making paper from recycled fibres uses 70% less energy than from virgin fibres!



*Reduce, reuse
and recycle*