



## Streams in the Wasteland

**TIME:** Estimated 15-20 mins. with 4 teams (more time for more teams)

**ACTIVITY:** "How long Lord, how long?"

How long will this trash take to become earth again (or biodegrade, decompose)?

**Materials:** for 1 set. Make a set for each team of 4-6 people.

ITEMS	HOW LONG TO DECOMPOSE
• Piece of newspaper	2-4 weeks
• Piece of cardboard	3 months
• Milk carton (not plastic)	5 years
• Tin can	80-100 years (infinitely recyclable)
• Aluminum can	200-400 years
• Ziplock bag	300 years - Never disappears, becomes "micro-plastic"
• Plastic water bottle	450 years - Same as above
• Glass bottle	1000 years
• Styrofoam	Never

**Bible study** - Read the scripture and ask the questions. Invite a few moments for quiet reflection before asking for responses.

*The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. ~Isaiah 24:5*

**Ask re:** Isaiah 24:5 - In what ways is the earth polluted by trash? How does this happen? What covenant have we broken? (When Noah was shown the rainbow in the sky, that God established a covenant - a promise - to never destroy the earth, and humans have been called to fulfill our responsibility to "keep and tend" the earth (Gen. 2:15), not destroy it.

**Introduce the activity:** Every day we use materials that contain our food and drink or provide surface for reading and writing (papers). If these materials are not disposed of properly in the trash can, are not reused or recycled, where do they go? (pause and ask for some answers). Some of these materials are recyclable while others are not. Too many of them end up in our local streams, rivers, and ultimately the ocean. So if they end up in the waterways or on the ground, how long does it take for them to "go away," return to the earth (decompose)? With this activity we are about to find out!

**Instructions:** Each team is given a ziplock bag containing the materials listed. Tell the group of participants to work together with their team to decide the order in which the items will breakdown or biodegrade and become earth again, (from the least amount of time to the most amount of time). This does not have to be a race, but if that adds more excitement to the activity go ahead! If you choose to do this then just note who comes in first, second, third, etc. When all teams have completed their lineup of the materials. Then start with the first item and go through the list (NOTE: the Materials list is in the correct order.) Note - If George Washington had an aluminum can of soda, it would still be here!

**Closing Reflection :** Read the scripture and ask the questions. Invite a few moments for quiet reflection before asking for responses.

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*

*I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. ~Isaiah 48:19*

Ask re: Isaiah 48:19 - What "new thing" did you learn that can fulfill the covenant that God established with Noah and the earth? How can we "keep and tend" the streams of God's Creation by minimizing our trash and disposing of it properly?

**Closing Prayer:** God, Creator of this good earth with all its land and waters, help us to be good caretakers and guardians of this Garden of Eden. May we be ever mindful that there is no "away" when we throw things "away". Guide us toward the "new thing" that heals and restores your beautiful Creation. Amen.