

Caring for Creation



*A study series looking at a Christian response
to creation and the climate.*



Share an opportunity today!

Caring for Creation Bible Studies



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Introduction

In recent times, it seems that we are increasingly being told that the world is suffering from serious environmental distress. The media continually sends us messages that water is becoming scarcer, that forests are being destroyed, plants, animals and marine life are being pushed to extinction and perhaps most prominently that our climate is changing. These problems seem complicated and it is hard to know what to believe, what to do or even whether we should be concerned. These bible studies are aimed at helping us understand what a Christian response to environmental issues may look like and in particular, what that means for the way we deal with climate change.

Catalyst has a particular interest in the environment and climate change, because if the climate science is correct, it is the world's poor that will bear the brunt of the problems even though they are least able to cope with them and the least responsible for causing them.

Study 1 - Why Care?

1. Few amongst us are not moved when we take in the beauty and wonder of the natural world, whether this be an untamed ocean, a tranquil lake, the life and richness of a forest or any other of the wonderful vistas that creation blesses us with. The bible tells us that all of this was created by and belongs to God and he delights in what he has made (Psalm 24:1-2). Many people find that they feel most connected with God and his movements in the universe when they take time out to see the splendour and beauty with which God has imbued his creation. Anne Frank, a victim of the Holocaust wrote at age 13, "The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature."

Take some time to think of a moment, place or image where you have found the beauty of God's creation to be most evident. Discuss this memory with your group as well as the feelings it created in you.

2. Genesis 1 tells us that God created us "in his own image". The exact meaning of this phrase has been debated in Christian tradition for nearly 2000 years. The scholar, J. Middleton argues that it is a direct reference to God sharing his dominion and rulership over Creation with all of humanity.

Read: Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:4-15

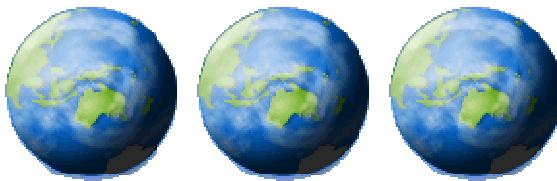
What do you see as the implications of having rulership and dominion over creation?

3. These passages suggest that God has entrusted us with enormous power over the earth which he has created. They suggest that it's not just God's sovereignty that decides the fate of creation, but also our decisions and actions. It is often argued that since God has shared this sovereignty with us, we are free to use creation in any way we wish to in order to serve our own needs. Yet acting with only our interests in mind often has devastating consequences.

Read: Mark 10:42:45 and John 13:13-17

How do these passages frame the way Jesus expresses and exercises his beliefs on rulership and leadership? What implications does this have for the way we exercise the dominion and rulership that God has entrusted us with over his creation?

4. These texts challenge us to adopt a position of servant kingship towards creation, where exercising our God-given authority means we are challenged to see the needs of creation as vitally important. An ecological footprint is a measure of how much of the earth's resources we use relative to how much the earth can sustain. The World Wild Life Fund estimate that based on their research, Australian's have one of the largest ecological footprints on the planet. If everyone consumed resources the way Australian's did, it would take three earths to sustain us.



You can find out your personal ecological footprint by visiting wwf.org.au/footprint

Think of ways in which humanity has cared for God's creation and ways we have failed to care. Do you think as a whole we have been good 'stewards' in exercising the authority God has given us over creation?

One has to ask Christians if they can imagine the pain of the parents who lovingly create a home for their children and one night return to find it wrecked by a teenage party, or simply treated as a hotel with a fridge to be raided and a place to dump dirty clothes; or of Michelangelo completing the Sistine Chapel ceiling and sharing all his learning, experience and skill with his children, then offering them the use of his paints for their own artistic expression – and finding that they have used them to scrawl ugly graffiti across his masterpiece.

Stephen Rand in the Care of Creation: focusing concern and action

5. The renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs argues that if humanity continues upon its current trajectory, the damage to the environment, the economy and hundreds of millions of people across the globe will be catastrophic. However, he states that we have the ingenuity, technology and capacity to make changes that can avert this disaster whilst also ensuring that humanity continues to have increasing living standards – all we need is the strength of will and the determination to act.

Here are 10 simple lifestyle changes you can make to protect the environment

1. Use renewable energy.
2. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.
3. Reduce the amount of meat and fish in your diet.
4. Install energy efficient globes in your house.
5. Drink tap water instead of bottled water.
6. Drive less and drive smarter.
7. Use less heat and air conditioning.
8. Use less hot water.
9. Get an energy audit done on your home.
10. Speak out for the environment to your friends, family, churches, co-workers and politicians.

Discuss as a group if anyone of you is doing some of these already and how they have found it? Think of one thing that you could do for the environment, and begin doing it in the next week. (You can use the list above or think of your own).

Just for kicks...

1. Gandhi once said that, “To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves”. Try planting a seed. You can then let the care, upkeep and growth of this plant be a reminder of the need to be faithful stewards over God’s creation.
2. Go to wwf.org.au/footprint and find out your personal ecological footprint.

FACT BOX

Humanities Impact on Earth

Since around 1750, the human population has risen from approximately 700 million to just short of 7 billion. In addition to this, our average output per person has increased 10 fold. The combined effect of this is that humanity is consuming about 100 times more than it did prior to the industrial revolution. Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen has said the scale of human activity is now so large that it is throwing every fundamental life sustaining system on earth off kilter. We each have an effect on this based on the foods we eat, the water we wash with, the things we buy etc. The six key areas where humanity is significantly impacting the environment are:

- 1. Land Use and Deforestation***
- 2. Greenhouse Gas Concentrations***
- 3. Water Scarcity***
- 4. Loss of biodiversity in plant and animal life***
- 5. Depletion of fish stocks***
- 6. Pollution and destruction of water ways***