



How Are We Related to God's Creation?

Session 1

Genesis 2:7, 15, 18–20a; Psalm 8



Session Objective

Scripture tells us many things about our relationship to God's creation. From the very first chapter of the Bible, we learn that we are part of creation. In Genesis 2, God gives us a responsibility to care for the world. This session will help students consider their role within creation and their responsibility to it.

Faith Statement

After God had made all other creatures, God created humankind, male and female . . . endued them with living, reasonable, and immortal souls; made them after God's own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it, with dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall.

—Westminster Larger Catechism (7.127)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- In what ways are human beings related to God's creation?
- As followers of Jesus Christ, what responsibility do we have (or not have) for the earth?
- How important or not important is it for us to take care of God's creation? Should this be our highest priority as Christians? Are other things more important?



Explore

Read Genesis 2:7, 15, 18–20a and explore the following questions:

- Who named you? What have you named in your life?
- What words would you use to describe the relationship between someone who names something and the entity that was named?
- Why do you think God let humans name the animals in Genesis 2?
- In verse 7, God formed *man* (Hebrew = *adam*) from the dust of the *ground* (Hebrew = *adamah*). How does this word connection affect our understanding of the passage?
- What do verses 15 and 18–20a imply about your own relation to God's creation?

Read Psalm 8 and explore the following questions:

- What does *dominion* mean in these passages?
- What is the difference between *dominion* and *domination*?
- How does *having dominion* (or *ruling*) connect with being "made in God's image"?

Note to Leader: Consider using Express, Option A, from the main curriculum; it is suitable for a coffeehouse.



Express

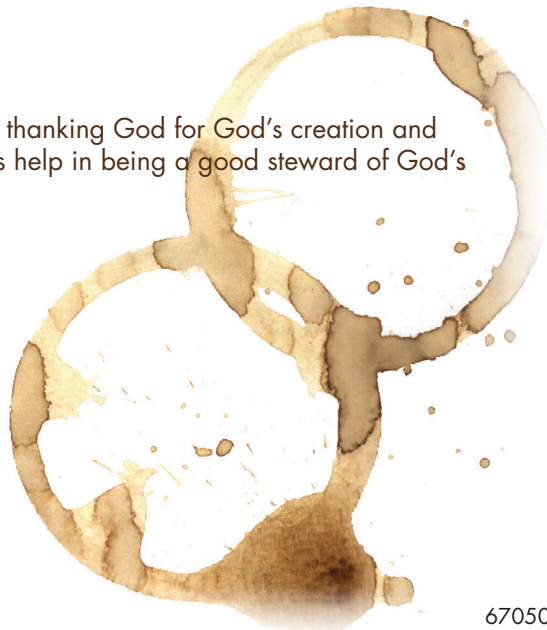
Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the Bible passages.

- What do pollution and waste do to God's creation? What three words describe how you feel about the pollution and waste in God's creation?
- How do scarce resources affect God's creation and creatures? What three words describe how you feel about scarce resources in the world?
- How do you add to the pollution of the world? How do you add to the scarcity of resources?
- In your community or around the world, what things are happening to control pollution and to conserve scarce resources? What are you currently doing to control pollution and to conserve scarce resources?



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for God's creation and asking for God's help in being a good steward of God's creation.





What Does the Old Testament Say about Taking Care of Creation?



Session 2

Genesis 13:2–12; Leviticus 25:1–7

Session Objective

Through the ancient history of the Hebrew people, Jewish laws, and prophetic understandings, Scripture reveals a consistent ethic of conservation. This session will help your students consider how that message applies to their lives and how it affects the lives of others.

Faith Statement

As stewards of God's creation who hold the earth in trust, the people of God are called to: a. use the earth's resources responsibly without plundering, polluting, or destroying, b. develop technological methods and processes that work together with the earth's environment to preserve and enhance life, c. produce and consume in ways that make available to all people what is sufficient for life, d. work for responsible attitudes and practices in procreation and reproduction, e. use and shape earth's goods to create beauty, order, health, and peace in ways that reflect God's love for all creatures.

—Book of Order, W-7.5003



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What stories or passages from the Bible can you think of that have to do with creation?
- If Jesus were to visit us today, how do you think he would react to how we interact with the earth?
- What stories or passages from the Bible can you think of that teach us how we should interact with the earth?



Explore

Option A: Read Genesis 13:2–12 and explore these questions:

- What was the conflict in the story? If you were Abram, what kinds of things might you have done?
- What things do people struggle over today? What do those struggles do to the land and people involved?
- What does this story imply about your responsibility in conserving the world's resources? What would a Christian response be to resource scarcity?
- How might this story help people who are currently involved in conflicts over resources?
- What does this story imply about your responsibility in conserving the world's resources?

Option B: Read Leviticus 25:1–7 out loud and discuss how the Jewish practice of Sabbath for the land applies to us today, using the following questions:

- When do you most need rest? How is rest helpful to you?
- What are some other people, places, or things that rest?



Express

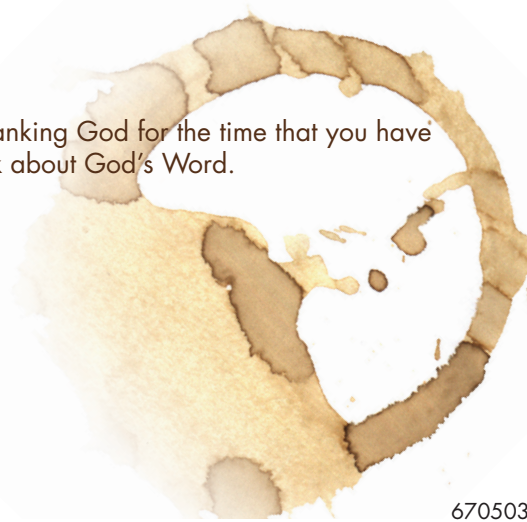
Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the Bible passages.

- How would you respond if someone asked you, "What does the Old Testament say about taking care of creation?"
- Where in your life could you do a better job of living out your faith by doing a better job of taking care of creation?



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together to talk about God's Word.





Session Objective

Our Christian faith revolves around the person of Jesus the Christ. His words and example are inspiration for our behavior. His crucifixion impels us to make sacrifices for our neighbors. His resurrection gives us hope. Today's session explores what Jesus teaches us about environmental stewardship.

Faith Statement

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In God's reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between humans, and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all humankind to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. . . . Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellow person, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

—Confession of 1967 (9.44)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Are humans more important than other life on earth? Why or why not?
- Which is more distressing: what our waste and abuse of resources can do to the earth or what our waste and abuse of resources can do to the people who suffer as a result?
- Is it sinful not to recycle everything we possible can? Why or why not?
- Based on what we know about Jesus Christ, how would he approach recycling and how we use our resources?



Explore

Read Matthew 6:25–34 and explore the following questions:

- Jesus says that many people worry about what they eat and drink, what their body looks like, and what they wear. Do you know people like this? Are you like this? Why do you think people can be like this?
- What does a follower of Jesus Christ care about when it comes to buying clothes or food?
- What are some normal cultural comforts that you use that are not so good for the earth or for other people in the world? What are some product choices or food choices that you have made in order to be a good eco-steward?
- This passage says that God takes care of the birds and flowers. Is God still caring for nature, or has God given up, or have humans overwhelmed God, or what?



Express

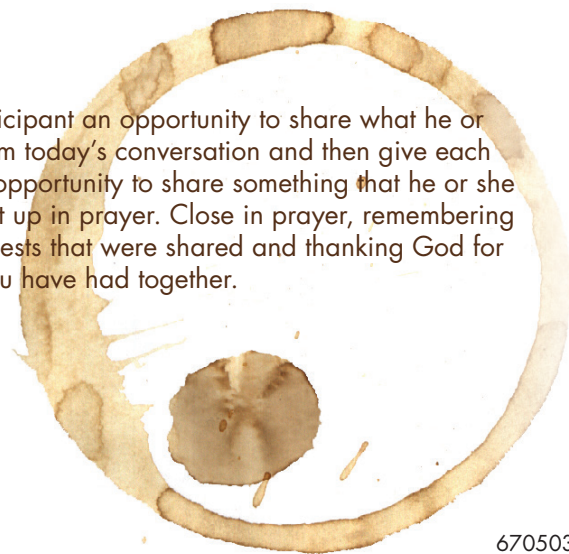
Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the Bible passages.

- How many of your friends and family members regularly recycle as many items as possible?
- Is recycling a regular part of your lifestyle? Why or why not?
- Do you consider recycling an "eco-mandment" (an ecological commandment we learn from the values expressed in the Bible) or just something extra to do?
- Should we expect everyone to recycle? Is it sinful to not recycle?



Exit

Give each participant an opportunity to share what he or she learned from today's conversation and then give each participant an opportunity to share something that he or she would like to lift up in prayer. Close in prayer, remembering the prayer requests that were shared and thanking God for the time that you have had together.





Session Objective

There are so many things that a person of faith can do to help creation and so many parts of God's creation that need help! In this session your students will learn more ways to live a just, neighborly, "green" Christianity. Just as important, they will learn the unique Presbyterian motivation for obeying God's commandments and "eco-mandments" (ecological commandments we learn from the values expressed in the Bible).

Faith Statement

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of God's eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

— Westminster Confession of Faith (6.022)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- On a scale from 1 to 10, how "green" a person are you? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely "green") Is this level of environmental stewardship in your life adequate to you? Why or why not?
- Would God rather you bring someone to church or convince him or her to care for the earth?
- What does God expect from us in terms of living lives of environmental stewardship? What can be challenging about putting our faith into action in this way?

- Is someone who cares about the environment automatically a follower of Jesus Christ? What more must an environmentalist do or believe in order to be a follower of Jesus Christ?
- Is Jesus serious when he asks us to follow and teach everything that he commanded? How does that affect the way in which you might urge your friends to follow God's "eco-mandments"?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the Bible passages.

- What exactly does it mean when you say that a building is a "green" building or a company is a "green" company? What does it mean if you say a person is a "green" person?
- How would you respond if someone asked you, "What can I do to be a 'greener' person of faith?"
- What are YOU doing to continually place a higher priority on being a "greener" person of faith?



Explore

Read James 2:14-17 and explore these questions:

- What does James say is more important: faith or works? (*Neither; he says they are related.*)
- James is probably concerned here with salvation. Which do you think is more important to salvation: faith, works, or grace? (*Salvation is not earned by beliefs or actions; it is given by God's grace.*)
- If actions don't lead to salvation, what is the point of eco-stewardship?

Read Matthew 28:16-20 and explore these questions:

- What does Jesus ask us to do in this passage?
- What does Jesus say about eco-stewardship in this passage? (*Nothing specifically in this passage; however, we can include eco-stewardship in the discipleship that he calls us to.*)



Exit

Give each person an opportunity to share one or two things that have challenged him or her throughout this four-session course on God's creation. Close in prayer.