



WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS CARE ABOUT

CREATION?

CREATIVenergie

Unlocking Sustainable Energy for Abundant Life



What does Ecology have to do with faith?

A young woman once remarked that she had always felt a disconnection between her love of nature and her Christian faith. We were rowing around the Southern Gulf islands of British Columbia and near the beginning of the journey, she told me that growing up in the Church, she had always felt a dissonance - a lack of harmony - between her love for ecology and what her Christian faith taught her about the world and who we are in it. God was Creator, that was for sure, but the mission of God's people was purely spiritual, she had been taught: to preach the word, make disciples and save souls. The work of caring for the earth's creatures and their habitats was dismissed as environmentalism, or as some lesser form of social gospel.

In another case, a missionary who had been working in his ministry for more than a decade recounted how he had once tried to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to people who had for generations farmed potatoes in the harsh and arid Andes of South America. The missionary recalls the moment he realized that although such metaphysical questions had been at the forefront of his journey to faith in Western Europe, they weren't the same kinds of questions being asked by people whose experience of God and the world was tightly entwined with the land, the seasons and the harvest. And although he knew that God was the creator and sustainer of all of these, he struggled to articulate just how a rural subsistence farmer could encounter Christ in the potato fields.

These stories are not uncommon, yet the bible teaches not only that Creation brings glory to the creator God but that human beings find their true identity when we understand who we are created to be in the world.



A. Creation brings glory to the creator God – it reflects his character.

Read Genesis 1.

Discussion

Q1. In what ways does God take care of Creation?

- God brought order out of chaos and filled what was empty.
- God made places/habitats that were suitable for the rich variety of life-forms that he made.
- God blessed the creatures that he made (1:22,28): He wants birds, sea creatures and humans to thrive and fill their habitats.
- God provides food for them (1:29-30).

Q2. What does Genesis 1 tell us about the character of the creator God?

- God takes pleasure in Creation: God saw that each part of what he made was good (1:4,10,12,18,21,25), and that the totality of what he made was very good (1:31).
- God loves to provide: it is God's good design that His creatures depend on Him, a God who loves to provide.
- God is an abundant God: He doesn't just want his creatures to survive, but to thrive and multiply.
- there are also multiple varieties not just one bird, one plant to eat etc - an expression of creativity and abundance of colour, taste etc

Q3. How does Creation bring glory to God?

- Creation displays to the universe what kind of God is behind it all - one who brings order from chaos, one who blesses and provides and takes pleasure in his creation. NB this is in stark contrast to the kind of gods the ancient near east cultures were accustomed to who were seen as capricious, dangerous and vengeful.
- Creation itself also brings glory to God simply by being what it was made to be - a home in which all its residents thrive and enjoy abundant life.
- Creation worships the Creator

Genesis 1 teaches us about the character of the creator God. We see that God brings order out of chaos, fills what was empty and makes places and habitats that are suitable for the rich variety of life forms that he makes. We also see that God blesses the creatures that he makes, provides food for them and wants them to thrive and fill their habitats. And we see that when God looks at all that he has created, he takes pleasure in it, seeing that it is very good!

Creation glorifies the creator because it reveals the God who is behind it all! Creation itself brings glory to God simply by being what it was made to be - a place in which all created things thrive and enjoy abundant life with their Creator.

But we are only too aware that this isn't always the case in our world today. We have spoiled Creation in so many ways and by doing so not only spoil what God wanted his creatures to enjoy, but also reduce Creation's God-glorifying potential.

B. God entrusts His people to care for creation.

Reflect on the following passages and discuss what they reveal about humanity and our purpose in Creation:

If the group is stuck for ideas some questions to consider might be:

- *What does it mean to be made in the image of God?*
- *How does Genesis 2:15 explain what is said about 'ruling' in Genesis 1:26?*
- *What do the principles in the Exodus and Leviticus passages teach us about how we should relate to the land and other creatures?*

Genesis 1:26-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God made man and woman in his own image, and told them to be fruitful and increase in number; to fill the earth and subdue it; and to rule over the other creatures. • These themes are intertwined, so that caring for creation is an integral part of what it means to be a human being made in God's image. We are to do this in a godly way, reflecting God's character, or 'imaging' God to Creation (i.e. cultivating habitats, blessing fellow creatures so that they flourish, taking pleasure in Creation as in Q1)
Genesis 2:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam and Eve were to work (avad = serve) and take care of (shamar = guard/conserv) their local place. • This is what the 'ruling' in Genesis 1:26 involves.
Exodus 23:10 & Leviticus 25:8-55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exodus 23:10-13 & Leviticus 25:8-55 – God's people were to care for their land and its creatures so that they would enjoy peace.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16

Discussion

Q3. How does 2 Timothy 3:16 encourage us to apply the Old Testament's teaching about caring for our places and their creatures?

- All scripture is God-breathed, including the OT and it's teaching about creation and our role as God's image-bearers to work for its flourishing.
- This verse is usually only applied to preaching and teaching of the Word: but caring for creation must also be taught as it is scripture and useful for training in righteousness.
- Training in righteousness: OT has much to teach us about how righteous living looks
- Equipping us: this is very practical, e.g. principles of gleaning, sabbath year, jubilee...

Genesis teaches us that we are made in God's image and were placed into the Garden of Eden to work and take care of it. In Hebrew the word translated as 'work' (Gen 2:15; NIV) is 'avad' which means more literally to 'serve' and the phrase 'to take care of' (Gen 2:15; NIV) comes from the Hebrew 'shamar' which is literally to 'guard'. Therefore, the 'rule' that humankind is given over creation in Genesis 1:28 is to serve and to guard - or conserve - creation.

*And Genesis has already told us in chapter one what this looks like when we are shown a God who brings order from chaos, cultivates habitats, provides food and works for the flourishing of all life forms so that they thrive in those habitats. Caring for creation is therefore nothing less than what we were made for! This has been humankind's purpose and charge from the beginning. This wholeness, this relationship of harmony and **peace** between all created things and their Creator, is what the ancient Hebrews called 'shalom'.*

As the story unfolds in Genesis however, we find out that sin enters the world when Adam and Eve disobey God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17; 3:14-19). This disobedience and the curse that it brings upon the creation makes it impossible for humankind to properly reflect God's image: the image, as it were, is 'marred'.

C. The Gospel is Good News for Creation.

Reflect on these passages and discuss how the Lordship of Christ connects with the mandate to care for creation:

- If the group is stuck for ideas some questions to consider might be:
- Does the coming of Jesus change humankind's purpose to serve and guard creation? If so, how?
- What does Jesus' lordship and sustaining of creation mean for Christians?
- Is the reconciliation that Jesus brings solely spiritual? If not, what does it mean for the physical earth to be reconciled?
- How does God's plan for the future of the heavens and the earth affect how we live today in relation to the earth?

<p>Colossians 1:16 & Acts 2:22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is Lord of creation - therefore caring for creation is an act of worship. • All things created through him and for him - what we learn about in creation is all part of the same story, Jesus is not something 'new'.
<p>Colossians 1:17 & Hebrews 1:3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus sustains creation.
<p>Colossians 1:20 & Romans 8:21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus has reconciled all creation to God.
<p>Matthew 19:28 & Acts 3:21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus has ensured the future of creation.
<p>2 Corinthians 5:19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus has given us the message of reconciliation and the ministry of reconciliation.

The arrival of Jesus in the New Testament is not a new story, in fact the bible teaches us that Jesus is the one who holds the whole biblical story together. We learned in Genesis that humankind was created for a purpose: to bear God's image to all of creation by serving and guarding it, working for

the welfare and flourishing of every living thing and bringing His peace and blessing to the whole world. However, when sin entered the world, the result was the ‘marring’ of that image - humankind no longer reflected their creator.

The good news though, is that the work of Jesus on the cross has reconciled us to God, restoring what was marred and making us able to fulfill our identity as image bearers of God! Moreover, Jesus has reconciled and is restoring not only humankind, but all of creation! The two are not separate actions - the redemption of God’s people and the restoration of creation go hand in hand. “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8: 20-21 [NIV])

And finally, if all things were created through Jesus and for Jesus, then our caring for creation is no less than an act of worship to the Creator Himself as we join in His work of sustaining and restoring the earth.

D. CREATIVenergie: Unlocking access to sustainable energy for abundant life.

Watch the following video of a UK organization set up by Christians who are incorporating creation care into their work to unlock access to sustainable energy for abundant life. (Click thumbnail or follow links)



<https://youtu.be/KrbERRaKits>

E. So, what now?

In your groups choose one or two of the following questions for open discussion and further thought:

- 1. Does my faith currently express care for creation? How/why not?*
- 2. In what ways do, or could, I care for creation better?*
- 3. How does creation care connect with mission?*
- 4. In what ways can creation care be incorporated into the life of our local church?*
- 5. What will I start, or stop, doing from today to be a better steward of the world God has created for me to live in?*