

The Green Christian

Young People's Conference 2008

What are two words in **Genesis 1:26-28** that could lead someone to believe that we can do whatever we want as we relate to creation?

What does **Genesis 3:17** and **Romans 8:19-22** tell us about the current condition of creation?

What do the following verses tell us will happen to the earth?

Isaiah 51:6, 65:17 2 Peter 3:12-14 Revelation 21:1

What might the above verses lead someone to believe in terms of how we can use creation?

God and Creation

Read **Genesis 1:1-25**. What do these verses tell us about how God felt about all that he created?

In **Colossians 1:16-17**, what three things do we learn about creation's relationship with Christ?

Read **Job 38:1-11, 25-26, Job 39:1-6**. What do these verses tell us about God and creation?

Psalm 19:1-6 tells us that the heavens declare what about God?

What does **Romans 1:18-20** tell us may be learned about God through creation? What are some words that come to mind?

Psalm 24:1-2 To whom does the earth belong?

What does **Psalm 65:9-13, Psalm 104, Matthew 6:26-29** tell us about how God interacts with creation? What emotions does this bring out of the Psalmist?

How do these verses help us understand how we should view creation and interact with it?

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Man and Creation

What does **Genesis 1:26-27** and **Psalm 8:3-9** tell us about how man is different from other living things and the rest of creation in general?

What instructions were given to Adam in **Genesis 2:15**? How does this help us understand what God's intentions were for man interacting with his environment?

What are the proper uses of plant and animal life as seen in the following verses?
Genesis 1:29-30 **Genesis 2:9** **Genesis 9:1-3** **Psalm 104:14-15**

In **Leviticus 25:1-6**, what instructions were given to the children of Israel in terms of how they were to care for the land given to them?

In **Deuteronomy 22:6-7**, what instructions were given to the children of Israel in terms of taking wildlife for food?

God made King Solomon the wisest of all men. In **I Kings 4:30-34**, we learn that his wisdom extended to what things? What can we learn from this?

Discussion

In general, mankind approaches his relationship to the environment from several alternative perspectives. Discuss each of these.

1. Apathy
2. Naturalism
3. Pantheism (New Age Worldview)
4. Christian Stewardship

Given what we've learned from the Scriptures above, what do you think should be the Christian's attitude toward the environment?

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Is Judeo-Christian thought to blame for ecological problems? (Abuses of the environment, wildlife etc.)

- Rightly or wrongly, Judeo-Christian thought has sometimes been blamed for abuses of creation.
 - Man was given “dominion” over every living thing and told to “subdue” the earth, be “fruitful and multiply”
 - The present earth is under a curse and will be dissolved anyway. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. We are not called to save this one.
 - Genesis 3:17 The earth is cursed because of sin.
 - Romans 8:19-22 All creation has been subjected to futility due to sin.
 - Isaiah 51:6, 65:17 Present earth to be replaced with a new earth
 - 2 Peter 3:12-14 Present earth to be replaced with a new earth
 - Revelation 21:1 Present earth to be replaced with a new earth

Four Approaches to the Environment

- Apathy
- Naturalism
- Pantheism
- Christian Stewardship

Apathy

- This may include some of the points under Judeo-Christian thought above.
- There is indifference to how man's actions are impacting the environment, which may include ignorance as to what drives the impact and the consequences.

Problems with Apathy

- This is ultimately selfish and ignores the fact that God created all things for his pleasure and glory.
- May lead to unintended consequences when we learn too late the results of irresponsible use of our environment.

Naturalism

- Focus is on human survival.
- Man cannot survive without a healthy planet.
- We must act to preserve our planet in order to rescue the future of our children.

Problems with Naturalism

- Nature does not have value in and of itself (intrinsic value); it has value only as long as we need it for survival.

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- If, as technology increases, we are able to artificially reproduce portions of the ecosystem for our survival needs, then certain aspects of nature lose their significance.
- This view is ultimately destructive, because man will possess only that which he needs. The rest of nature can be discarded.

Pantheism (New Age World View)

- All of nature is equal because all is god and god is all (*small “g”*).
- Nature is respected and valued because it is part of the essence of god.

Problems with Pantheism

- While pantheism elevates nature, it simultaneously degrades man.
- Man has no more value than a blade of grass.
- In India, rats and cows consume needed grain and spread disease due to this world view.
- To restrict the rats and cows would be to restrict god, so man takes second place to rats and cows. Man is part of nature, yet it is man that is being restricted.

Christian Stewardship

God as Creator

- God is the creator of all things. The creation is not part of his essence. Rather, he is above creation
 - Genesis 1, 2 He was pleased with his creation
 - Exodus 19:5 All the earth is the Lord’s
 - Colossians 1:16-17 He is before all things
 - Job 38, 39 He cares for his creation
 - Psalm 19:1-6 The heavens declare His glory
 - Psalm 24:1-2 The earth belongs to the Lord
 - Psalm 65:9-13 The Lord’s providence over his creation
 - Psalm 104 The Lord’s providence over his creation
 - Psalm 145:9, 15-16 The Lord’s provision for all living things
- God loves and cares for his creation; many living things man has never discovered, but God knows them all and cares for them all.
 - Psalm 104:24-26
 - Matthew 6:26-29
- Creation declares God’s sovereignty and glory. Creation is one way God reveals himself, therefore the beauty, complexity, wisdom and order of creation gives us a glimpse of what God is like.
 - Romans 1:18-20

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- Nature has value in and of itself (intrinsic value) because God created it.
- The rock, tree and cat deserve our respect because God made them to be as they are.

Man is God's image-bearer and so distinct from the rest of Creation

- Man is different from the rest of nature because he alone is created in God's image
 - Genesis 1:26-27
 - Psalm 8:3-9
 - Psalm 139:13-16
 - I Corinthians 15:49
- While wildlife is not to be romanticized as though it had human emotions, as Christians, we respect it as having value since God made it. Its purpose is to glorify its Creator.

Man's stewardship of Creation

- Man was given dominion over nature
 - Genesis 1:26-28
- Man is not sovereign over the lower orders of creation. He does not own them. They belong to the Lord.
- Man was told to "cultivate and keep the garden" Gen 2:15
 - We may use nature, but only as God intends.
- We should seek to understand our environment. King Solomon's wisdom, given by God, extended to details of the creation around him
 - 1 Kings 4:33-34
- Unnecessary pollution and waste degrades nature.
- Man is to exercise dominion over nature not as though we are entitled to exploit it, but as something borrowed or held in trust.
- Science has affirmed a complex "food chain" where each species provides nutrition for another including man. There is a balance to the environment that man should not upset.

Biblical Examples of God's Expectations to Care for the Land

- Leviticus 25:1-6 Let the land replenish itself with needed nutrients.
- Deuteronomy 22:6-7 Food should be acquired without killing the source of future food.
- Isaiah 5:8-10 Judgment on excesses.

God has given both plants and animals for food and plants that are pleasant to look at

- Genesis 1:29-30

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- Genesis 2:9
- Genesis 9:1-3
- Psalm 104:14-15
- Acts 10:10-13

Creation's curse and future restoration

- Although all creation is under a curse due to sin, God will create a new earth where righteousness will dwell. Likewise, God has reconciled mankind to himself (those who believe on Him). So all of creation, including believers, has been redeemed, awaiting a future more complete manifestation of that present reality.
 - Colossians 1:16-21
 - Acts 3:19-21
 - Ephesians 1:7-10
 - Revelation 22:2-4
- Just as we are told to live out practically in our lives, what we know we have become in Christ (new creatures, our old ones having died to sin), so we can also respect creation as something belonging to God and which he will restore in the future.
- Even though we know our created natural bodies decay and eventually die, yet we care for it and sustain it as long as possible; so should we treat the rest of God's creation around us.

Stumbling Blocks for Christians Regarding Creation's Care and Keeping

- This world is not my home, I'm just passing through. Since we're headed for heaven anyway, why take care of creation?
- Caring for creation gets us too close to Naturalism, Pantheism or the New Age Movement.
- There are too many worldly people out there doing environmental things. If people who don't share my beliefs in God and Jesus Christ are working to "save the earth," I know it can't be right for me.
- We need to avoid anything that looks like political correctness. Being "politically correct" these days means being pro-abortion and pro-environment, and I'll have nothing to do with that.
- I don't want to be an extremist or alarmist. Many in the "environmental movement" are extremists.

What can we do? Some things to think about

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- The debate over whether man is the cause of “climate change” or “global warming” is likely to continue for some time. We should recognize that the “environmental movement” is ultimately a humanist movement. However, our motivation to live in harmony with creation should be a spiritual one, not a political one.
- Our great commission is to be fishers of men, not save the environment. However, we can still be good stewards of the environment as we carry out that commission and live our lives to please him, honoring and respecting what he has created around us.
- “Responsible” use of what God has given us to meet our human needs. Support restoration of the environment at reasonable cost where possible. Avoid extremism and irrationalism regarding our interaction with the environment.
- We should seek to understand our environment and how our actions impact it.
- Avoid excessive materialism which may lead to excessive use of natural resources.
- Avoid killing purely for “entertainment” vs. to provide food for human consumption, self-defense or control overpopulation of specific species. God has sanctioned the use of animals for food.
- Seek to understand and appreciate our environment as the revelation of God’s invisible attributes. Recognize the beauty, complexity, wisdom and order of creation as a glimpse of what God is like, and imagine what unfathomable beauty and splendor yet awaits us in heaven!

Man was given dominion over creation. This is true. But since the Fall, man has exercised this dominion wrongly. He is a rebel who has set himself at the center of the universe.... Because he is fallen, he exploits created things as though they were nothing in themselves, and as though he has an autonomous right to them. Surely, then, Christians, who have returned through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ to fellowship with God, and have a proper place of reference to the God who is there, should demonstrate a proper use of nature. We are to have dominion over it, but we are not going to act as though it were nothing in itself or as though we will do to nature everything we can do.

-- Francis Schaeffer

If it were not for the outside world, we should have no inside world to understand things by. Least of all could we understand God without these millions of sights and sounds and scents and motions weaving their endless harmonies.

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They come out of His heart to let us know a little of what is in it.

-- George MacDonald

The wilderness provides us with wonderful natural resources. But it is so much more than a place of economic opportunity. When we look at an Appalachian mountain as mostly a mound of coal or a hill of timber for us to use for our own purposes, we may be failing to see it comprehensively. A second look can help us to see the same mountain as a watershed, a climate regulator, a source of clean air, a shield against flooding, a habitat for wild creatures, a thing of beauty, a place of peace and solitude, and a location for recreation. And we are not seeing it as God sees it – in all its glory with all its purposes. It's part of our God-given trust of the earth to have a comprehensive and biblical vision when looking at the wilderness.

-- Dean Ohlman