

Lesson 18

Stewards of God's Creation

We should take care of God's earth.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God created the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them. God created man to rule over his creation. We have a responsibility to take care of God's creation and use it wisely.

Key Passage

Genesis 1:26

Memory Verse

Psalm 8:3–4 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Our God is the Creator and Sustainer of all the universe—everything we have comes from him, and it all belongs to him. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The sea is his, for he made it; and his hands formed the dry land" (Psalm 95:5). "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10). "Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast" (Psalm 119:90). God's creation clearly brings him glory, and he rejoices in his works (Psalm 104:31). We can rejoice, too, in God's graciousness to us each day as we appreciate the beauty and wonder around us. However, we must be diligent to respect this world because it does not belong to us.

When God created the world, it was perfect—it was all very good (Genesis 1:31). Man and all of creation lived together without any stress in a harmonious environment. But God did provide a hierarchy of authority. He intended that Adam and Eve be the ones to tend the garden and keep it (Genesis 2:15). He instructed them to multiply and fill the earth and to have dominion over it and all of its creatures (Genesis 1:28). This "Dominion Mandate" ordained by God gives all of us, as the heirs of Adam, a special responsibility—to care for God's earth with diligence and concern from a biblical perspective.

What this means, however, is not always easily determined. Because of the high profile of this issue, you will come across many strong opinions. God did

create resources for man to use to sustain life. But we find today those who want to abuse the resources out of greed and selfishness, causing needless loss and destruction in other areas. We see also the overly enthusiastic conservationists who appear to worship the creation more than the Creator—clearly a position not ordained by God (Romans 1:25). What we need to remember is to consult the full counsel of God's Word in these matters. Because this is a sin-cursed world, we must weigh each specific decision in this area based on the circumstances and the expected results of that decision while asking the question, "How does this line up with biblical principles?"

As you consider this issue, remember that Solomon in all his wisdom reminds us that there is a time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to keep and a time to cast away (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8).

Ultimately, this is an area that must be covered in prayer and balanced carefully between abuse of God's creation and environmental idolatry. It is God's creation. He made it, and he will destroy it by the Word of his mouth at his appointed time (2 Peter 3:7). Meanwhile, he has promised to preserve it: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22).

Historical/Apologetics Background

Today the big issue surrounding the earth's environment is global warming, or climate change.

We are barraged with claims and facts that may leave us more confused than ever. There appear to be five recurring claims. We'll take a quick look at those here.

Claim #1: Global warming is really happening. Yes, this is true. According to the National Climatic Data Center, the average global surface temperature has risen approximately 1.2F (0.7C) since 1880. We do not know exactly what has caused this warming.

Claim #2: Humans are causing global warming. Again, it seems to be true that the addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by man's activities has increased the global temperature. However, the carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere is not the sole cause of this warming. And it has been determined that the warmer climate itself can actually produce more CO₂—giving a distorted measure of the cause and effect of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

It has also been determined that the changes in atmospheric CO₂ do not always correlate well with changes in the earth's temperature. For example, between the years 1910 and 1940, the temperature of the earth rose at a higher rate than did the levels of CO₂ found in the atmosphere.

Claim #3: Global warming will cause the extinction of animals. First of all, many animals became extinct long before the issue of global warming was considered, and species continue to go extinct. The woolly mammoth and the Miohippus (a small, three-toed, woodland horse) are examples of animals

found in the fossil record that are extinct today. Although there are predictions that many animals will become extinct by 2050 due to climate change, currently there are no documented extinctions resulting from global warming.

Claim #4: The oceans will rise dramatically in the next century. There is no hard scientific evidence currently available to back up this prediction.

Claim #5: Global warming will cause more weather catastrophes than normal. Again, there is not sufficient evidence to make this claim. In fact, there are conflicting reports. Some blame global warming for an increase in hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts, and extreme temperatures, while other studies have determined that global warming is not to blame.

From a biblical perspective, we know that we live in a world that is far from perfect and is groaning from the effects of sin (Romans 8:22). We also know that the earth has been established by God, its future lies in his hands, and he has made us its caretakers. We have no idea how long the earth will last. But because of the credibility of God's Word, we can be sure that the earth will be purged by fire in the future (2 Peter 3:10–12)—not destroyed because of CO₂ emissions.

Limited License to Reproduce

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, nonsublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization which is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

Bible Version

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.