

Lausanne Global Classroom

Creation Care Study Guide

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Bible / theology & creation

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Lausanne/WEA
Creation Care Network

An Introduction to Creation Care

The goodness of creation and our vocation to care for it

Watch episode 1  aroc.me/global-classroom 

Think

Take a moment to pause. Write down or share your reasons for wanting to watch these videos, and what you are hoping to learn.

Reflect

'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'
Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

Genesis affirms the goodness of creation.

God is communal and relational and He creates a communal and relational creation. The Earth is part of a community to which we belong and into which we were created.

In keeping with this, as Rachel Mash says in the video, God's first command to people is to care for all He has made. People are given a vocation of care-taking, of cultivation.

However, the Christian tradition has not always been known for having this understanding. Rather than people being a part of creation, the emphasis of the Christian tradition has been on a people set apart from creation.

The stereotypical picture of the Genesis creation story sets up Adam and Eve in the hierarchical position of rulers. The emphasis of this picture is human domination, not cultivation.

In 1988 the scientist James Hansen testified about climate change in a US congressional hearing. That year Time magazine awarded 'Man of the Year' to 'Endangered Earth'. The accompanying essay by Thomas Sancton explicitly mentioned the impact of the Judeo-Christian tradition's interpretation of Genesis as permitting human domination over the earth, and acting, 'as an invitation to use nature as a convenience.'

Discuss

What does the 'first command' of Genesis 2:15 mean in our context? If people obeyed this command, what would change? (Would there be fossil fuel extraction, for example?)

Do you see yourself more as being a part of creation or as being set apart from creation? Why? Has this changed over time?

In the video Dave Bookless shares how his journey began by asking what God felt about what he was doing to his world. How do you think God feels about what we are doing to his world? How do you think God feels about what you are doing to his world?

When do you 'use nature as a convenience'?

Pray, asking God to teach you to love creation as He does.

Creation Care as a Gospel Issue

The integrity of creation care within the gospel, the Lordship of Jesus Christ

Watch episode 2  aroc.me/global-classroom/gospel 

Think

Instinctively, do you regard creation care to be part of the Gospel? Why or why not? What is the gospel?

Reflect

‘For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as servants for Jesus’ sake.’ 2 Corinthians 4:5 (NIV)

Ed Brown starts this video by quoting from the Cape Town Commitment, ‘Creation care is a gospel issue within the Lordship of Jesus Christ’.

The gospel, the ‘good news’ we have to share, is the Lordship of Jesus Christ (‘what we preach is... Jesus Christ as Lord’).

Partly because of the way we have disconnected the spiritual and material, the focus of ‘preaching the gospel’ has been teaching individual salvation and relationship with God. But, as Ruth Padilla DeBorst says, ‘we need to expand our understanding of the good news’ to encompass its full breadth.

Jesus Christ is Lord of all creation.

We reduce the gospel when we exclude the created world from Jesus’ Lordship. Creation is not only good; it is integral to both the glory of Jesus Christ, and His redemptive purposes.

We need to think about the implications of this as people who believe Jesus Christ is Lord and are seeking to live in accordance with this (‘...as servants for Jesus’ sake’).

If Jesus’ Lordship extends over all of creation, creation care becomes integral to the gospel and integral to our witness that Jesus Christ is Lord. As Mandisa Gumada says in the video, ‘creation care needs to be something we live by’.

Discuss

What does it mean to preach Jesus Christ as Lord?

Has this video changed your understanding of the gospel?

Can you identify ways in which we have disconnected the spiritual and material? How has this impacted your own faith? Do you have any ideas of ways to reconnect the spiritual and material?

If creation care is integral to the gospel, what does this mean for mission? How about discipleship?

Pray, praising Jesus Christ and thanking God for the breadth of the gospel.

The Biblical Foundations of Creation Care

The love of God: our Creator, Sustainer and Saviour

Watch episode 3  aroc.me/global-classroom/bible 

Think

What has challenged you most from the first two videos?

Reflect

'For God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.' John 3:16 (NIV)

Dave Bookless talks about creation care as a 'golden thread' running through the biblical narrative.

This thread is one we can easily miss, something illustrated well by Rachel Mash's example of growing up thinking that John 3:16 referred only to human beings.

Just as when you read the gospel accounts looking for angels you discover they mark the road all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary – when you read the Bible looking for creation you discover an entire dimension of the love of God.

God so loves the cosmos.

The love of God is the central revelation of the Bible. Creation is made in love. Creation is sustained in love. Creation is redeemed in love.

The Colossians 1 passage which Ed Brown discusses encapsulates this. Jesus, the incarnation of God's love, is acknowledged to be our Creator ('in him all things were created'), our Sustainer ('in him all things hold together') and our Saviour ('through him to reconcile to himself all things').

Discuss

How easy to find is the 'golden thread' of creation care?

Mncedisi Masuku talks about God revealing Himself to humanity through nature. When has this been true in your own experiences?

Peter Harris says 'God made the world in wisdom to be diverse'. What is wise about the diversity of creation? What does it teach us about God?

God is our Creator, Sustainer, and our Saviour. Do you relate to God more easily as one of these things over the others? Why might this be?

Pray, using Colossians 1:15-20, asking God to reveal more of his love for all created things.

The Radical Renewal of Creation and the New Earth

The scope of redemption

Watch episode 4  aroc.me/global-classroom/renewal 

Think

What do you think about when you think of life after death? What has shaped your thinking about ‘the end times’ and the future of creation?

Reflect

‘The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.’ Romans 8:21

The hope and promise of redemption is the radical renewal of all things.

Creation itself will be ‘brought into’ freedom: the completion of God’s good works involves the continuity between new and old.

This is what we see in our own redemption. Our life post-death in Jesus is the completion of our humanness. And because our humanness is rooted in earthly creation, our redemption is consistent with this.

Jesus’ resurrected bodily existence is our model for redemption: resurrected bodily existence is the completion of God’s good work and the renewal of the original created bodily existence of Adam and Eve.

God’s faithfulness means redemption is our certain hope as Christians, but as Ed Brown’s analogy with the body highlights, this does not change our obligations now. We will surely be held to account for our destruction and exploitation of what is loved by God.

Discuss

How do you feel when you consider the prospect of bodily resurrection? Can you imagine creation free from decay?

Do you agree that humanness is rooted in earthly creation? Why or why not?

What is helpful about Ed Brown’s analogy with the body? What makes it work? Why does certain hope leave our obligations now unchanged?

Take some time to read through 2 Peter 3. You may like to consider this passage in light of NT Wright’s short booklet ‘New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of Christian Hope’, or Dave Bookless’ chapter ‘The new creation: on earth as in heaven’ in his book ‘Planetwise’. What questions does this leave you with?

Pray, thanking God for the hope and promise of redemption.

Critical Issues Facing Creation Today

The brokenness of the world today

Watch episode 5  aroc.me/global-classroom/brokenness 

Think

How do you feel about the state of the world? How safe or unsafe does the world seem?

Reflect

'Cursed is the ground' Genesis 3:17

Many of our global systems operate on a linear trajectory which progresses from extraction, to consumption, to waste.

Such systems are dishonouring to God – both in their own right but also in the inequity they promote.

Victor Mughogho talks about infant mortality and malnutrition in Malawi. Our food systems use processes which are unsustainable and wasteful to produce 2.5 times the amount of global food calories needed to feed the world's population . And yet the distribution of this food is so unequal that at the same time as the West is wasting food, others are dying from malnutrition.

Stephen Mbogo issues a powerful challenge in this video, 'the message we are carrying to people is that we are all responsible'. This is a challenge for two reasons: accepting responsibility means simultaneously accepting our limitations and our mal-intent which contribute to problems, and our agency and ability to act with courage to care for creation.

Discuss

What issues facing creation do you see around you?

This video has two different perspectives on responsibility. What are they and what do you think about them? Who do you think holds responsibility for the brokenness creation is facing?

The best predictor of a person's environmental impact is their level of wealth. What bearing does this have on your thoughts about creation care?

Pray for the healing of brokenness in the creation you see around you, and for those suffering as a consequence.

Climate Change and the Problem of Human Greed

The problem we have is not technical but spiritual

Watch episode 6  aroc.me/global-classroom/greed 

Think

What do you think are the root causes of climate change?

Reflect

'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Matthew 6:21

Katharine Hayhoe refers to climate change as a 'threat multiplier', which amplifies the existing risks of social and economic disruption.

Climate change is also a vulnerability multiplier. This is because risks interact with the existing social and economic context.

For example, women as a group are already, and will be in future, more affected. This is because of a phenomenon called the 'feminization of poverty', where women experience poverty at rates that are disproportionately high in comparison to men. There is already UN research which shows 80% of people displaced by climate change are women .

Peter Harris talks about human greed being 'the real problem'. Climate change is an outworking of living in a way which outstrips the replenishment of the vital systems on which all life depends. It is not a technical problem, but a spiritual problem relating to what we trust and where we put our 'treasure'.

As Christians we profess that our 'treasure' is in Christ, trusting in God for the security and hope of fulfillment which the consumption of resources appears to offer.

And yet the lifestyles of those of us in the Western church are often highly carbon intensive.

Discuss

Climate change raises many questions about how we live, and many of these questions are spiritual. Can you make a list of different questions?

Peter Harris mentions the director of the UN Environment Programme, what would you answer to their question, 'How do we change people'?

The opposite of greed is not contentment, but trust. Do you agree? What are the implications of this for Christians in the context of climate change?

Do you struggle to reduce your own consumption of resources? Could this be connected to where your treasure is?

Pray, repenting of your own greed and declaring the total sufficiency of Christ.

What Science and Faith Can Teach Us About Creation Care

*The ways we make sense of the world around us,
God's wisdom in creation and our response of worship*

Watch episode 7  aroc.me/global-classroom/wisdom 



How do you make sense of the world around you?



'How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.'

Psalm 104:24

Tiwonge Mzumara-Gawa speaks beautifully about how her work builds her faith. The wonder of creation is something she can share with others.

The wonder of creation connects all of us. God creates 'in wisdom', and yet our response to the wisdom of creation is marred.

Both Victor Mughogho and Peter Harris pick up on this in the video. We may be changing the world rapidly, but these changes are leaving people behind.

Wisdom and worship hold in common the recognition of worth. Our response to God's wisdom in creation should lead us into lives of worship. Lives which display and honour the worth of all creation.

If used well, science and faith are tools by which to uncover the wisdom of God in creation. They can help us make sense of the world around us and lead us into lives of worship.



When do you experience the wonder of creation?
What response does such an experience elicit?
What exactly is it that you are responding to?

We are leaving people behind. Where do you see this in your own context?

What do you think about the idea that wisdom and worship hold in common the recognition of worth? How do you uncover the wisdom of God in your own life? Does this lead you into worship?

Pray, thanking God for his wisdom in creation and asking for more of this to become apparent to you, that it might lead you into worship.

Creation Care and the God of Hope

The faithfulness of God is our hope

Watch episode 8  aroc.me/global-classroom/hope 

Think

Are you hopeful about the environment? Does this fluctuate? Why or why not?

Reflect

'And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.' Revelation 22:2

This video is about hope, but it is also therefore about faithfulness.

Frederico Catihe talks about the work across the provinces of Angola, Katharine Hayhoe about the work in sub-Saharan Africa, and Ed Brown about the work of individual families restoring land.

In each case, the work takes time. In each case, the area of work seems small in comparison to the scale of the need. In each case, however, the faithfulness of people is bringing healing to creation.

As Ed Brown reminds us, we are called to be 'faithful not successful'.

Often we can measure hope by apparent success. But the strength of our hope is not based on our apparent success, but the faithfulness of God, who is good.

As people of God, we are called to be people of hope. Trusting in God's faithfulness, we hope for the healing of creation. Trusting in God's faithfulness, in our own failure we remember the seeming failure of Christ when he died on the cross, and we hope for God's redeeming power to be made visible like it was in Christ's death.

Discuss

Ed Brown says that 'humanly speaking' there is little reason for hope, and yet - 'God is a God of Hope'. How do we both grieve for situations of devastation and apparent hopelessness, and hold onto hope?

What work are you doing now that is taking time, and seems small in comparison to the need? How do you have hope for this work? What does it mean to be faithful in this context?

Do you measure hope by apparent success?

How do you know God is faithful?

Pray, focusing on your hope in your own work and asking God to help you be faithful as he is faithful.

The Role of the Church in Creation Care

The church is to build the kingdom of God on earth

Watch episode 9  aroc.me/global-classroom/church 

Think

How would you finish the sentence ‘The kingdom of God is...?’

Reflect

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven...”
Matthew 6:9-10*

‘The kingdom of God is bringing heaven to earth’ says Dave Bookless. Similarly, Swiss theologian Hans Küng says, ‘The kingdom of God is creation healed’.

If the role of the church is to build the kingdom of God, the church first needs to decide what it is, and where it will be built.

A church which believes it must wait for the end of the earth before it sees the kingdom of God will become a holding bay or a lifeboat, waiting for the arrival of a kingdom it has no part in bringing about.

A church which believes it is bringing heaven to earth that others may see the kingdom of God will become the active body of Christ, partnering with God in the arrival of His kingdom on earth.

This is a church where caring for the poor, tackling injustice and caring for creation are issues of the kingdom of God, and part of the church’s task.

As Rachel Mash says, It is a church likely to draw people to Jesus as they see the church doing ‘something which matters’.

In building the kingdom of God on earth, the church as the body of Christ has the opportunity to embody the same incarnational love.

We can all take up the offer which the young person in this video received: to say, ‘we used to go to church, now we are church’.

Discuss

What do you think about the claim that ‘The kingdom of God is creation healed’?

Which vision of the church most excites you? Why do you think this is?

Would people look at your church and say ‘these people worship a creator God’? What would have to change for this to be true?

Ruth Padilla DeBorst says that, ‘the main claim on our lives is God’s love’. What would it look like for the church to take this seriously in our present global environmental context?

Pray, asking God how you can be part of His church, building the kingdom of God on earth.

Caring for Creation One Church at a Time

The response of the believing church is practice

Watch episode 10  aroc.me/global-classroom/commission 

Think



When you see the church care for creation, what does it teach you about God?

The practice we undertake may look different depending on the context, but as a church we should understand this practice of caring for creation as being integral to the life of church.

Reflect



¹⁸All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...' Matthew 28:18-19

What we know as the 'Great Commission' starts from Jesus stating his Lordship over all creation.

In this video, Ruth Valerio talks about bringing together theology and practice. Because of our belief that Jesus has 'all authority in heaven and earth' there is a practice to undertake, namely, to teach and 'make disciples'. It is significant that the Great Commission in Mark's gospel starts with 'Go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation' (Mark 16:15).

The call to creation care is not the call to recycling, but the call to a discipleship in which every part of our lives witnesses to our belief that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Discuss



Which example of creation care from the video stands out to you?

How does our commission to 'make disciples... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded' relate to creation care?

How can we ensure creation care is an integral part of being church, rather than a 'policy'?

Pray, praising God for his authority. Think about how you can move from theology to practice.

Creation Care Wherever You Are

The invitation to daily dependence

Watch episode 11  aroc.me/global-classroom/dependence 

Think

How have the videos you have watched so far left you feeling?

Reflect

*¹¹Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'*
Matthew 6: 11-13

What God has commissioned us for is hugely exciting. As the global church we are called to work together to build God's kingdom, of which everyone and everything is invited to be a part.

Faced with this call, we can often sink backwards, overwhelmed by our own sense of brokenness, as well as the brokenness around us. As Dave Bookless says, we can end up feeling more overwhelmed than excited.

Thankfully, God knows our tendency to become overwhelmed, and He remembers 'that we are dust' (Psalm 103:14); the God who is our Creator and Saviour is also the God who sustains us through each day.

We therefore pray to God to 'give us today our daily bread'.

It is in and through daily dependence that we are invited to respond to God and what He calls us into.

It is only in this way that we can go about using the resources we have for blessing, and begin to 'reimagine' the world, as Peter Harris puts it.

Discuss

The phrase 'give us today our daily bread' is so familiar that we can miss its richness. Take one word at a time ask why that word has been chosen, rather than another.

What are you overwhelmed by?

How are you sustained by God?

How can you practice daily dependence on God?

Pray, asking God to show you 'the one thing' you can do to start.

Caring for Creation for Tomorrow Starts Today

The way ahead

Watch episode 12  aroc.me/global-classroom/today 

Think

Think back to the first video when you wrote down your reasons for watching, and what you were hoping to learn.

What have you learned, and what will you take forward?

Wherever we are, we can ask how we will take responsibility for building the kingdom of God on earth. We can ask how we can embody the love of God, and we can choose to accept our invitation to daily dependence on God.

Reflect

²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.' James 1:23-24

Katharine Hayhoe says we are 'exactly the people' to do whatever we can to care for creation. Gumisa Ncumisa follows this by saying creation care is about 'taking charge and being fully responsible'.

As Christians, we affirm Jesus Christ as Lord and we respond to the revelation of His love: the good news of Jesus which extends to all created life.

Discuss

In what ways are you like the man who looks in the mirror and then immediately forgets what he looks like?

Do you feel like you are 'exactly' the person to care for creation? Why, or why not?

Do you struggle most with the 'theology' or the 'practice' of creation care? What can you do to move forward with either or both of these aspects?

Pray, thanking God for what you have learned, commit yourself to loving creation as He does.

The Bible and Biodiversity

The work of A Rocha



A Rocha gives practical expression to the conviction that the Christian life involves care for creation. How have you been impacted by A Rocha?



*'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it'
Psalm 24:1*

What gives nature its value, and what is our response to be?

Dave Bookless situates the value of nature within the context of who God is. The world and all its creatures belong to God, bring him glory, and are a part of God's plans in 'creation, covenant, redemption and reconciliation'.

This means the value of nature centres on God. Nature's value is theocentric, not anthropocentric: species have value independently of their usefulness to us.

We often act as though the value of nature centres on us rather than on God, evaluating the importance of creation from the perspective of its benefits and usefulness to us. When we choose to re-centre our lives on God, we are making a choice with profound implications for the way we regard the rest of creation – our own purposes can no longer be of primary concern.

Our response to the theocentric value of nature is an acceptance of our 'job description', the 'divine vocation' of reflecting God's character in how we care for creation. This care is an integral part of

the wider calling we have as Jesus' disciples, and it is rooted in the redeeming hope of Christ for all creation.

A Rocha's work is a response to the biblical call to creation care and the theocentric value of nature. The character of this work is summarized by A Rocha's 5 core commitments: Christian / Conservation / Community / Cross-cultural / Cooperation.



What do you think the value of nature centres on? Is this reflected in the way you act?

Dave Bookless says in this video that our vocation is 'to glorify God in assisting in the flourishing of the whole of creation'. How does that fit with your understanding of mission?

How would you respond to someone saying that conservation work is not part of, or not a priority within, mission?

Can you explain the inclusion of each of A Rocha's 5 core commitments from a biblical perspective?

How well do the commitments sum up a biblical response to creation care? Do they leave out anything important?

How would you explain to someone why A Rocha works in the way it does?

Pray, thanking God for the way A Rocha has impacted you, and asking that A Rocha would be a faithful outworking of our Christian belief and calling.