

Stewarding creation

Vision: to understand the biblical principles of not overexploiting the resources we have but allowing time for rest and recovery.

Isaiah 5:8-10 and Leviticus 25:1-7- Caring for our land

Questions to discuss:

1. In our first Bible study on **Genesis 1:26-31** what role did God give to Adam and Eve in relation to creation?
2. What does Isaiah 5:8–10 warn will happen to our land/ natural resources if we exploit them? What examples can you think of where we are exploiting our 'land' in our local area and globally?
3. What does God command should happen every seven years to the land that the people are farming? Why does God want to ensure that the land can regenerate?
4. Can you think of any examples of where we see positive examples of protecting our environment locally or globally?
5. How can we come to see this care for the environment as an integral part of our worship to God?
6. What further actions could we take to protect our environment both locally and globally, including the indirect effects of actions like our purchases?

Act of love: prayerfully talk together about an action you can take as a group to impact locally and one to impact globally (e.g. linking up with the Weston environmental group; only eating meat at the weekend; buying sustainably resourced clothes (see <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>); or reducing travel and offsetting carbon at <http://www.eaglesmalawi.org/CarbonOffset.html>)

Going deeper:

Make a list on a flip chart or large piece of paper of your top ideas for actions to take. Then carry out a fun 'bean ranking' exercise (see over page) so you each have 8 beans (or other objects) and score the ones you think are most important, before discussing the totals, seeing if you think they are in the right order and coming to an agreed ranking as a group.

Extra resources:

- Read this article, recommended by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Environment: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html>
- Look at community shared approaches to environmental issues <https://www.repowering.org.uk/> and watch this to learn how it works in practice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQy6rFPhEUw>

Notes for facilitator: see over page

Notes for facilitator:

- *God gives them responsibility to steward creation: as we found out in the first study, God created man to fill the earth, to subdue the earth (the Hebrew word 'kabash' used here for 'subdue' is used only in relation to subduing the land, calming it to achieve its purpose, bringing shalom); and to rule over every living creature (the Hebrew word 'radah' used here for 'rule' means to reign like a King; to be responsible for and take care of).*
- *God warns that if we exploit our land and resources, it will result in the earth becoming desolate. For example, the destruction of the Amazon rain forest; the acidification of oceans leading to coral reefs destroyed;*
- *God commands them to leave the land to rest for a year in order that the nutrient cycles will be replenished. He cares about this as he cares about the people who need to live off this land to have food security*
- *Rest gives the land time to replenish and to be renewed by rebalancing soil nutrients, breaking pest and disease cycles, and making it more fertile.*

Many countries including Malawi are facing an enormous crisis in food security - millions of people do not have access to sufficient food of enough quality to lead a full and healthy life. Climate change is exacerbating these vulnerabilities and the situation will continue to get worse.

The church has a responsibility to help people address this situation. We can make a difference to climate change and food security as a church. If we live in a farming area, we can help people explore the causes of food insecurity in their community and together develop simple strategies, such as using Farming God's Way. If we live in a city, there are already probably groups about climate change with whom we can get involved or we might feel called to start our own.

As well as showing love to others, increasing food security by caring for the world is also fulfilling God's mandate to human beings to steward creation. We all have a responsibility to live in a right relationship to creation, protecting God's environment by restoring what has already been damaged and preventing future destruction through climate change

Bean Ranking

1. Create a list of the things you want to rank.
2. Give everyone the same number of beans each (around 8) and ask them to rank the list according to what they see as most important/ effective. They can give all, some, or none to each.
3. Look at the weighting together and discuss whether it seems right, moving around the beans so nothing has the same number
4. Once the group has reached consensus, count the score for each to see the final ranking
5. Decide how you will take forward action on the first 2-3 issues

