

A Christian Perspective on Environmental Care

The question of how humans should relate to the environment is one of the pressing issues of our generation. Climate change and biodiversity loss regularly make the headlines, and spark heated debates across society. As Christians, we need to develop a biblical understanding of creation, both to find out how we should personally respond to environmental crises, but also to be able to engage with the questions of people around us. In this workshop, we will look at what the Bible says about the relationship between God, humans, and nature; and how this relates to what we know from recent developments in environmental science. This will help us to understand the problems that we face, the responsibility that we have, and the hope that we can share.

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A. What environmental crises do we face?

- Biodiversity loss
- Pollution
- Climate change

B. How do people around us view nature?

- Anthropocentrism
- Ecocentrism

C. How does the Bible view nature?

- Theocentrism – divine sovereignty, human dominion, and the worth of nature
- Sin – against God, Man, and Nature
- Redemption and hope

D. A Christian response to environmental crises

- Enjoy God's good creation: be grateful & content
- Love your neighbour: be responsible & just
- Don't fear for the future: share the hope

Key messages

1. **Where nature suffers, humans suffer!**

Human well-being is intimately intertwined with the integrity of the natural systems around us. Environmental problems such as deforestation, water pollution, and climate change cause serious suffering, often for the poorest members of society.

2. **Creation is about the Creator, not about us.**

The Bible presents nature as God's good creation, created for His glory. As humans, we are given a position of special authority among the other created beings, and are permitted to use them for our benefit. Yet, we do not own God's creation, are restricted in what we may do with it, and must realise that nature was not primarily created for us. Both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism violate this divine order, placing created beings (whether human or not) in the place that ought to belong to God, and are therefore idolatrous.

3. **We are responsible for the consequences of our actions.**

Throughout the Bible, we find a clear imperative to act justly in our dealings with others. This is still true in today's globalised society, where our Western lifestyle frequently leads to the exploitation of people living on the other side of the world, often through environmental degradation caused by our overconsumption. As Christians, we should weigh the consequences of our actions and strive to live justly to the best of our ability.

4. **We have a hope to share!**

We live in a culture that is rediscovering the value of nature, longs for justice, and fears for the future. As Christians, we can engage confidently in discussions about environmental issues, affirming the worth of creation, fighting for equity, and sharing our hope.

Further reading

- Schaeffer, F. (1970). *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*. Tyndale House Publishers.
- Houghton, J. (2007). *Why care for the environment?* (No 5; Faraday Papers). Faraday Institute for Science and Religion. https://www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/resources/Faraday%20Papers/Faraday%20Paper%205%20Houghton_EN.pdf
- Bookless, D. (2008). Christian Mission and Environmental Issues: An Evangelical Reflection. *Mission Studies*, 25(1), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157338308X293891>
- Vedder, D. (2022). Caring for Creation – Nature Conservation Within a Biblical Worldview. *Gospel and Academia Project*.