

Bible Study 2 ~ Sustainable living with all God's creation

Introduction

The existing environmental crisis we face in our world today is a reflection of broken relationship with our Creator: humans failing to take responsibility of care for God's creation, and for other communities, who are impacted by our actions. Only by respecting our connectedness with and responsibility for all creation will we be able to restore and protect our environment upon which human life depends. Psalm 65 talks of God's love and care for all his creation, including humanity. We need to reflect this care for the environment; it is a sign of our love for God, the Creator, and our neighbours, near and far, now and in future generations.

This Bible study is for use by small groups or individuals, and can be adapted to your own context.

You may wish to open in prayer. Read the Bible passage *twice*, if possible using different translations.

Psalm 65 ~ God caring for his creation

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed,
O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.
When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our sins.
Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.
You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.
Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.
You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

Discussion

You may begin by identifying key words that stand out from the Bible passage and discuss why they are important to you, and then discuss the questions below.

In biblical times:

- *What do you think this passage is about? Please retell it in your words.*
- *For what things do people rejoice in this psalm?*

- *In this context, what sins might people ask forgiveness for?*
- *How is God shown to care for the land and humanity?*

In our time:

- *What do we recognise from this psalm in our world today?*
- *In what ways has humanity damaged the environment?*
- *What is the impact of this damage on our neighbours, including the poorest communities?*
- *How can humanity repent of this sin and restore the right relationship with creation?*
- *How should humanity, made in God's image, care for creation? Identify practical actions we must commit to at individual and community level?*

How could we be changed by this Bible study?

By knowing:

- *that our actions can help or harm the environment and impact on our neighbours, near and far, now and in future generations*
- *how, through practical action and advocacy, we can help to restore and protect the environment*

By feeling:

- *that we can express our love and thanks to God by caring for the creation he loves*
- *responsible to care for the environment through our everyday actions and challenge others*

By acting:

- *to protect and restore our environment through actions which impact locally and globally*
- *to use our convictions and experience to advocate for change, locally and globally*

Prayer

Loving Father,

We rejoice in the beauty of your creation and pray for forgiveness where our sinful actions have harmed the environment and our neighbours. Please give us strength to change our behaviour and courage to challenge others. Convict us with an intense sense of responsibility to support those affected by climate change and protect us when we face these challenges ourselves. Help us to see clearly the way to restore our relationship with the natural world, for the good of all, as an expression of our love for you.

In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

Further passages for reading

Genesis 1: 1-25: God creates the world, human and non-human life, and all is seen as good.

Genesis 1: 26 – 2: 15: God creates men and women in his image to serve and protect his creation.

Leviticus 25: 1-24: Guidance on how humanity can live in harmony with the land.

Psalm 8: Describing how God has put humans in charge over creation, despite their unworthiness.

Romans 8: 19-23: All creation waits in hope of fulfilment.

References and other Bible studies

Bible text cited from NRSV 1989

Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living:
www.jubilee-centre.org/uploaded/files/resource_267.pdf