

Creation Care

By Evan Lenow

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Genesis 1:26–27 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: How can environmental policies be dangerous to the welfare of humans?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Genesis 1:28–31 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What does it mean for humans to subdue and rule over creation? What is included in our dominion over creation?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Genesis 2:15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: How does work represent a stewardship of what God has given us?

Scripture to Memorize

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Genesis 1:28

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will recognize that we are to steward the resources of this world with wisdom while not elevating the rest of creation above humanity.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

In a discussion at work, someone makes a comment that animals deserve more protection than humans because they are in danger from our aggressive misuse of the earth. In fact, they say it would be better for some humans to die than for an endangered species to disappear. Should you say something in response? What would you say if given the opportunity to respond?

Subdue and Rule over Creation

Read Genesis 1:26–31 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 26. dominion over. God intended from the beginning for mankind to rule over the rest of creation. The term *dominion* is sometimes translated as “rule.” This means mankind has a position of authority over the rest of the animal kingdom. Man and woman are not on the same level as animals. We have specific instructions from the Lord to rule over creation.

Of course, this should not mean that we pillage all of the resources in the world and leave it as an absolute wasteland. At the same time, however, we must not elevate the created world to a status above that of humans. When we implement environmental policies that harm human life, we invert the authority structure. The resources of the earth—plants, animals, natural resources, etc.—are to be used for the good of mankind.

One of the problems with the modern environmental movement is that it elevates the earth to the status of being worshipped. This is dangerous for two reasons. First, it places the value of the earth above that of humans. Second, it replaces God with the earth as the object of worship.

Verse 27. in His own image. The basis for mankind’s authority over the rest of creation comes from the fact that we are created in God’s image. We are the only part of creation that bears His image.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on how environmental policies can be dangerous to the welfare of humans.

Studying the Passage

Verse 28. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. One of the first instructions God gave to the humans He created was to be fruitful and multiply. God’s intent was for Adam and Eve to have children that would begin to fill the earth.

In recent decades there has been a great amount of discussion about controlling the population. Fifty years ago many people believed a population greater than five billion people would result in catastrophic hunger and a shortage of natural resources. Today we have more than seven billion people living on the earth with more room to grow.

In fact, countries that have begun to experience population decline are also experiencing economic decline. The desire to limit the number of people in the world has also resulted in some ugly policies of eugenics over the last century.

subdue it. This instruction is similar to the one given in verse 26. Adam and Eve were to subdue the rest of creation. This meant they were to make it subject to their control. **over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.** God gave Adam and Eve authority over all the major groups of animals. This reflects the same language used in verses 20–25 when He created the rest of the animals.

Verse 29. every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. Not only did God give Adam and Eve authority over the animals, but He also gave them all the plants and trees to use. Many of these would be used for food. We see here that nothing in creation was outside the control and authority of man.

The one exception was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 2:16–17, God told Adam he could not eat from that tree. Adam and Eve’s disobedience to this command would lead to their fall (Genesis 3).

Verse 31. it was very good. At the end of each day of creation, God had declared what He had made to be good. At the end of day six, God added the modifier “very” to demonstrate that it was now complete.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on what it means to subdue and rule over creation.

Cultivate and Keep It

Read Genesis 2:15 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. work it and keep it. God also gave Adam specific instructions about what he was to do in the garden. His job was to cultivate and keep it. Therefore, he was to till, plant, and harvest the garden. Even though the garden was in a state of perfection, Adam still had to work. In fact, God created us all to work. We may do different things, but work is part of our responsibility as humans.

Adam’s role of cultivating the garden was an act of stewardship. God gave him this responsibility, but God still maintained ultimate control over all of creation. We see this in Psalm 50:10–12 where we read, “For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fulness are Mine.”

Stewardship means we manage what God has given us. As managers we benefit from the proper use of His resources, but God remains the ultimate owner.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on how work is a stewardship of what God has given us.

Discussion Question

How should we view and use the resources God has given us in creation if we are stewards and not owners?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Creation care is an important but difficult topic to address. On one hand, we are the pinnacle of creation, and God has given us specific instructions to rule over, subdue, and cultivate the rest of creation (see Genesis 1:26–31; 2:15). Without human stewardship the earth would return to wilderness and become a dangerous place to live.

On the other hand, we cannot simply destroy creation to accomplish our short-term goals. Humans have a tendency only to look at the present rather than keeping the future in mind as well. We need to keep in mind the good of mankind in both the present and the future as we rule over creation.

Since God owns all of creation (see Psalm 50:10–12), we cannot act as if we have complete control over the earth. David tells us, “The earth is the LORD’s and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1). This means God is in control of every aspect of creation— even us.

Therefore, we must act as wise stewards in our care for creation. We can admire creation, but we must not worship it. We can use it, but we must not destroy it. We can care for it, but we must not exalt it. The key for creation care is to have the proper perspective on the earth. It is a valuable resource that demands our wise management, but it must not become our master.

You are likely to encounter countless perspectives on the environment during your lifetime. In fact, the dominant perspective on creation care will most likely change multiple times in the next fifty years, just as it has in the last fifty years. Just remember that you are a steward of God’s resources, and He has given you the responsibility to use them.

Follow up Question

How does God’s ownership over all creation impact the way we rule over the earth?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.