



The Christian in Creation

An online course

Churches Together in Boscombe



Introduction



At present the church's message about creation is mostly that we – humankind – have to care for it. That's true! But there's more to be said.

Caring for creation

In the first half of the course we look at scripture. We'll look at the responsibility God placed on man to care for what he created. We'll look at some of God's specific instructions related to agriculture. And we'll look at why caring for creation is so much a part of caring for others.

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



Other messages

But we will also look at some other areas of scripture that don't sit naturally under the heading of 'caring for creation.'

For example, we find that in the Old Testament God repeatedly communicated his displeasure through acts in creation. That is very relevant to understanding our present environmental crisis.

We may think of creation as 'the world out there' and not think of our own bodies as a part of creation. But if we accept that we have a responsibility to look after creation then we logically have a particular responsibility to look after our own bodies. Scripture has some interesting and surprising things to say on that.

We'll also include some fun and open-ended subjects. For example, did you know that in Genesis, God set a 'lifespan limit' of 120 years? Would you make living to 120 a goal? We'll discuss that!



“They keep saying that climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all. And yet they just carry on like before.”

Outcomes

If we accept that we have a responsibility towards creation then we need to think about what we are doing about it. It would be impossible in this course to think deeply about many forms of creation care, or take action in all areas simultaneously. But perhaps it's possible to think and take action in *one* area.

In the second half of the course we'll look at climate change. We'll look at some of the science, at the situation we're in, and at possible strategies we could follow to make changes. Some strategies are controversial. Would we consider civil disobedience in order to make a point? We'll look at that.

How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver – Proverbs 16:16



Somali refugees in Dagahaley refugee camp, Kenya

If you haven't thought through these issues then this course is important.

Life is more important than lifestyle. The world is more important than the world economy. If we do harm, we are culpable.



Do you want to know even more?! (If not, skip this bit.)

This is the lesson plan:

MAN'S AND GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE CREATED WORLD

Scripture	1	Genesis 1 and 2. God gives man a role in relation to the world he created. Man is part of the creation.
	2	Genesis 6-10. The flood. God uses the created world in his purpose.
	3	Genesis 6:1-4 and 11. A lifespan limiter of 120 years? Would you make living to 120 a goal?
	4	Numbers and other passages. God's instructions concerning the land.
	5	Proverbs. What leads to long life.
	6	Isaiah 24 and other Old Testament passages. God's action in the environment to communicate anger; what happens to the environment in 'End Times.'
	7	The gospels. Jesus' care for creation in healing miracles.
	8	The New Testament letters. A renewed world!

CLIMATE CHANGE

Science	9	Why greenhouse gases such as CO ₂ cause temperature to rise. The Greenhouse Effect.
	10	Why a small temperature rise has such a big effect. The hydrological cycle. Rising sea water levels. Desertification and flooding. More powerful weather effects and other changes.
Situation	11	Climate change indicators: temperature, rainfall, desertification and CO ₂ levels.
	12	Food security in Africa. The perfect storm: rising population, conflict and climate change.
Strategy	13	Government-level action. International agreements such as Kyoto, Paris etc. UK laws and targets. Personal carbon rationing.
	14	Community-level action. Demonstrations and marches, Extinction Rebellion. The ethics of civil disobedience with reference to Martin Luther King.
	15	Church-level action, e.g. Eco Church. Individual action and lifestyle changes. The impact of coronavirus on creation care.
	16	Wrap-up and feedback, action steps.



And you want to know even more?! (Otherwise, skip.)

These books will be my 'dialogue partners':

Bible and Ecology - Rediscovering the Community of Creation, Richard Bauckham

For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care, Steven Bouma-Prediger

Stewards of Eden: What Scripture Says about the Environment and Why It Matters, Sandra L. Richter

The Biblical Mandate for Caring for Creation, Dick Tripp

As Long as the Earth Endures: the Bible, creation and the environment, Jonathan Moo (Ed)

Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible, Ellen F. Davis

Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective, Noah J Toly (Ed)

Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World, Douglas J. Moo
Jesus and the Earth, James Jones

Is there a need for such an online course?

I believe so. As Christians we should think about this area. And I am not aware of any Christian courses on creation which cover this area of teaching, or are available online.

And about me?

I'm a Baptist minister in Bournemouth. Before becoming a minister, I lived in Azerbaijan for 17 years. I have prepared and run many training courses. I don't claim to be an expert in the subjects I'll be covering, but I've given a lot of thought to them.



The course is:

- Free
- Online, by video-conference
- One hour per fortnight
- 16 lessons
- There will be two groups, with a maximum of 30 people per group
- There will be a 40 minute lesson and 20 minutes discussion
- Lesson material is provided (pdfs)
- Start dates are Thursday 19th November at 7 p.m. or Friday 20th November at 11 a.m.
- There will be a break over Christmas.
- There will be a physical certificate at the end (posted to you) for those who attend 14 out of the 16 lessons.

How to join?

Please email me at simon.bartlett@virtuality.co and indicate which of the two groups you would like to join.

Places are limited. I will confirm that you have a place and send you a WebEx link to enable you to join. I look forward to seeing you!

Simon