



Stewards of God's Creation

7

Key Themes

- God is faithful to His promises.
- God upholds His creation.

Key Passages

- Genesis 1:26–31, 2:15, 8:20–9:1; Romans 1:22–23

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the role of mankind in God's creation.
- Recognize God's faithfulness in sustaining His creation.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, "Is recycling important for Christians? Why or why not?"
Have students use bookmarks to mark Genesis 1:26, Genesis 8:20, and Romans 1:22 in their Bibles.



Studying God's Word

page 4

At creation God gave man the responsibility to provide good stewardship over His creation. But it is God who ultimately sustains and upholds all things by His power. We can turn to biblical principles in order to execute this God-given responsibility properly.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity 1: Dominion Video Clip

page 6

Students will watch a brief video clip, "Dominion," from the Resource DVD-ROM. This video clip will reinforce the idea that God gave Adam responsibility for the earth and that responsibility is now ours.

- Preview the video clip "Dominion" (2:04) on the Resource DVD-ROM.
- DVD player and TV or computer



Activity 2: Being a Good Steward

page 8

Students will toss a ball around based on their decisions about what good stewardship of God's creation looks like.

- Gather two sponge-style balls.
- Being a Good Steward teacher's guide



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this week's lesson, read Genesis 1:26–31; Genesis 8:20–9:1; 2 Peter 3:5–7.

Our God is the Creator and Sustainer of all the universe—everything we have comes from Him and it all belongs to Him. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). “The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land” (Psalm 95:5). “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness” (Psalm 24:1). “For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:10). “Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides” (Psalm 119:90). God’s creation clearly brings Him glory and He rejoices in His works (Psalm 104:31). We can rejoice, too, in God’s graciousness to us each day as we appreciate the beauty and wonder around us. However, we must be diligent to respect it—because it does not belong to us.

When God created the world, it was perfect—it was all very good (Genesis 1:31). Man and all of creation lived together without any stress in a harmonious environment. But God did provide a hierarchy of authority. He intended that Adam and Eve be the ones to tend the garden and keep it (Genesis 2:15). He instructed them to multiply and fill the earth, and to have dominion over it and all of its creatures (Genesis 1:28). This “Dominion Mandate” ordained by God gives all of us, as the heirs of Adam, a special responsibility—to care for God’s earth with diligence, concern, and from a biblical perspective.

What this means, however, is not always easily determined. Because of the high profile of this issue, you will come across many strong opinions. God did create resources for man’s use in sustaining life. But we find today those who want to abuse the resources out of greed and selfishness, causing needless loss and destruction in other areas. We see also the overly enthusiastic conservationists who appear to worship the creation more than the Creator—clearly a position not ordained by God (Romans 1:25). What we need to remember is to consult the full counsel of God’s Word

in these matters. Because this is a sin-cursed world that is far, far from perfect, this may mean weighing each specific decision we make in this area based on the circumstances and expected results of that decision, while asking the question, “How does this line up with biblical principles?”

As you confront this issue, remember that Solomon in all his wisdom reminds us that there is a time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to keep and a time to throw away (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8).

Ultimately, this is an area that must be covered in prayer and balanced carefully between abuse to God’s creation and environmental idolatry. It is God’s creation. He made it and He will destroy it by the Word of His mouth at His appointed time (2 Peter 3:7). Meanwhile, He has promised to preserve it: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22).

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The big issue surrounding the earth’s environment today is global warming, or climate change. We are barraged with claims and facts being presented—leaving us more confused than ever. There appear to be five recurring claims. We’ll take a quick look at those here.

Claim #1: Global warming is really happening. Yes, this is true. According to the National Climatic Data Center, the average global surface temperature has risen approximately 1.2°F (0.7°C) since 1880. We do not know exactly what has caused this warming.

Claim #2: Humans are causing global warming. Again, it seems to be true that addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by man’s activities has increased the global temperature. However, the CO₂ (carbon dioxide) in the atmosphere is not the sole cause of this warming. And it has been determined that the warmer climate itself can actually produce more CO₂—giving a distorted measure of the cause and effect of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Claim #3: Global warming will cause the extinction of animals. First of all, many animals had gone extinct long before the issue of global warming was considered, and species continue to go extinct all the time. The woolly mammoth and the Miohippus (a small, three-toed woodland horse) are examples of animals found in the fossil record that are today extinct. Although there are predictions that many animals will become extinct by 2050 due to climate change, currently there are no documented extinctions resulting from global warming.

Claim #4: The oceans will rise dramatically in the next century. There is no hard scientific evidence currently available to back up this prediction.

Claim #5: Global warming will cause more weather catastrophes. Again, there is not sufficient evidence to make this claim. In fact, there are conflicting reports. Some blame global warming for the increase in hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts, and extreme temperatures, while other studies have determined that global warming is not to blame.

From a biblical perspective, we know that we live in a world groaning from the effects of sin (Romans 8:22). The earth has been established by God and its future lies in His hands. Because of the credibility of God's Word, we can be sure that the earth will be purged by fire in the future (2 Peter 3:10–12)—not destroyed because of CO₂ emissions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In considering the history of global warming, we find that evidence does suggest that the created world was warmer than the world today. In fact, it wasn't until after the global Flood of Noah's day about 4,300 years ago—only about 1,700 years after creation—that conditions were right to form permanent ice, which prompted the earth's one and only Ice Age. Scientists believe that the Ice Age peaked around 500 years after the Flood.

As stated above, we know that the average global surface temperature has risen approximately 1.2°F

since 1880. We also know that the changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide—the alleged cause of global warming—do not always correlate well with changes in the earth's temperature. For example, the temperature of the earth rose from 1910 to 1940 at a higher rate than the levels of carbon dioxide found in the atmosphere.

We also have indication that although the temperature of the earth has dropped since 2002, the carbon dioxide levels continue to rise. And it has been discovered that there were substantial changes in global temperatures in the ninth and seventeenth centuries, yet this could not have been a result of industry contaminating the air with CO₂.

Historically, there doesn't seem to be any conclusive pattern as to how the temperature of the earth reacts to those of us who live on it. We do know that the earth is God's and we are its caretakers. We have no idea how long the earth will last—but we are called to use biblical principles and judgment in maintaining it until Christ returns and it is renewed in the Consummation (Revelation 21:1).

For more information on this topic see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Sovereign Lord, I praise you, for you have revealed to us great truths in your Word. As I study the lesson this week, help me desire truth. Because when I earnestly seek truth, I will discover you! Transform my mind to the mind of Christ. Don't let me be confused by what I have heard in the media about climate change. Help me convey your faithfulness as a promise keeper to the students, so they will not be fearful about the future of the earth. Help us all to recognize the difference between being good stewards of the earth and environmental idolatry.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.



Review

In our last lesson, we looked at a biblical, yet typically unpopular and controversial, view of the age of the earth and the universe. We also looked at the popular view of the age of the earth and universe from a secular perspective.

Who can describe the biblical age of the earth and how it is calculated? *The biblical age of the earth is about 6,000 years. Using the genealogies from Genesis and other information, we know there were about 2,000 years between Adam and Abraham, about 2,000 years between Abraham and Christ, and 2,000 years since the time of Christ for a total of about 6,000 years.*

What about the secular view? How old are the earth and the universe and how are those ages calculated? *For the age of the earth, secular scientists look to the dates calculated from radiometric dating methods on meteorites. The current*

age is around 4.5 billion years. For the universe's age, the calculations and assumptions about the big bang are the source of the 13.7 billion year age.

It is important for us to remember that this is not a battle over science—there are no scientific proofs for an earth that is 6,000 years old, nor are there scientific proofs for a very old age for the earth. It is by looking to Scripture that we come to an age of roughly 6,000 years. There are many scientific evidences that set limits on the age of the earth and universe, and confirm a much younger earth than is widely taught, but the true history revealed in the Bible is where we should begin reasoning from. The earth only looks as old as the assumptions we start with.



➤ Write on the board, “Is recycling important for Christians? Why or why not?”

➤ Have students use bookmarks to mark Genesis 1:26, Genesis 8:20, and Romans 1:22 in their Bibles.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

God created the earth and everything on it. Then He created man and gave man the responsibility to care for the earth. We are going to talk a bit about that today.

Let's turn in our Bibles to Genesis 1:26–28. I need three volunteers to read one verse each. *Assign readers.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

OK. So what did we just read? What is this telling us?

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

Genesis 1:26–28

- ? First of all, who was speaking here? Look in Genesis 1:26. *God.*
- ? What is the relationship between man and the animals in this passage?
Man is to have dominion over the animals.
- ? What part of the creation does man have dominion over? *Over the entire creation including the earth and the animals.*
- ? Who knows what dominion means here? Can anyone guess? *Allow for answers.*

Dominion means responsibility or authority over something. In Genesis 1:26 God is giving man the right to rule over the earth—or have dominion over it.

- ? Good. Now go to Genesis 1:28. What was God saying to the people He just created? *Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, have dominion over it.*
- ? What does the word subdue mean here? *To bring under control.*
- Turn to Genesis 2:15. Will someone read that for me? *Assign a reader.*
- ? Based on this verse, what did God want Adam to do in the garden? *Tend it and keep it.*
- ? And what do you think that means exactly? *Allow for answers.*

It means that God gave man the responsibility to care for the Garden of Eden—he was to take care of the animals and plants that were there.

Dominion:
responsibility,
authority

Genesis 2:15

Discover the Truth

God created Adam and Eve and then gave them dominion—responsibility or rule—over the earth, to take care of the garden and all the animals God put there. This dominion or rule was given as a privilege and responsibility. They were to take care of these things, use them for their good, and manage it all well. God intended for man to live off the land—to use it in order to survive. We are to use the resources God has given us, but not to abuse them.

The dominion or responsibility that God gave to Adam has been passed down to us. Like I said, it is a very big responsibility. And it means that we all need to be involved.





Dominion Video Clip

MATERIALS

- Resource DVD-ROM to show the “Dominion” video clip
- TV and DVD player or computer

INSTRUCTIONS

We are going to watch a short video clip about the privilege man has to take care of God’s earth. Pay close attention. We’ll discuss a couple of things when it is finished.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

? What did this video say was one of the first jobs God gave to Adam? If you can’t remember, turn in your Bibles to Genesis 2:20. Allow students to look up the verse if no one can remember. Adam was to name all the animals.

This was a very serious job, like when a parent names a new baby. When God gave this job to Adam, He was showing Adam

that He trusted him with the earth—and since we are Adam’s descendants, we also have the same responsibility. The video showed some ways that we can obey God by managing the earth wisely.

? Who can remember something they saw?
Farming, gardening, caring for animals, recycling, studying streams and rivers, studying plants, etc.

God gave man the responsibility to manage His creation. God gave man intelligence, creativity, and language to communicate and work together to produce food from the ground, care for animals, control the rivers and flooding, recycle our waste, and in general, be good stewards of this precious, unique planet.

God cares for the creation—He is in charge of everything that happens. But, as descendants of Adam, we have the responsibility to care for it as well.



READ THE WORD

Although we have authority over the earth, some people are confused about what that means exactly. God warns us in His Word not to think more of His creation than we do of Him.

Romans 1:22–23

I’d like you to turn to Romans 1:22–23. *Will someone read that for me please?*

EXAMINE THE WORD

What are these verses telling us? Let’s see!

Observe the Text

Verse 22 is speaking about people who do not believe in God or trust Him. They are ungodly.

? What does this verse say about these people? Look closely. *They think they are wise, but they are fools.*

Right. They talk about how wise they are—but actually they are foolish—especially when it comes to the things of God. They are fools.

? Verse 22 tells us why the Bible calls them fools. But first, let's look at the words incorruptible and corruptible. What do you think those words mean? See those words in verse 23? *Allow for discussion. See if the children can come up with the answer based on the text around the words.*

Good! Incorruptible is describing God, right? In this text it means God is immortal or eternal. He is the everlasting God.

And corruptible means mortal or worldly.

Someone read verse 23 for me again. *Assign a reader.*

? So this verse is saying that these fools—the ungodly—have stopped honoring God, who is the eternal, everlasting one and have begun to worship what? Read the end of verse 23 and tell me what they are now worshipping. *Images of man, birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things.*

Incorruptible:
immortal,
eternal,
everlasting

Corruptible:
mortal, worldly,
earthly

Discover the Truth

? What have we discovered in these verses? *Allow for answers.*

What the Apostle Paul—who wrote the book of Romans—is trying to say is that many people have stopped worshipping the eternal, incorruptible, everlasting God who is the Creator of all the heavens and the earth, and they have begun to worship corruptible things—things of the world and things in creation. They are worshipping the very things that God created—instead of God the Creator!

Yet we are not to worship anything other than God—not any man, bird, or animal. We are to worship the Creator God, and not the creation—the earth—and what is on it.

Some people have made the earth their god. This is called Pantheism—a belief that god is the universe, or that the universe is god. They have taken their responsibility of caring for the earth too far. Instead of worshipping the Creator, they are actually worshipping the creation.

We are responsible for caring for the earth just like Adam was. But we are not to worship the earth. We are to use it and care for it for our good—and always to God's glory!





Being a Good Steward

MATERIALS

- Being a Good Steward teacher's guide
- Two soft sponge-style balls

INSTRUCTIONS

In this activity, students will determine if a certain activity is honoring to God and His creation or not. Using a couple of balls will make this activity fun and help the students pay attention.

? Do you think you know how to be a good steward of creation in a way that honors God as the Creator? *Yes/no.*

Let's see! I'll need you to stand in a circle for this activity. *Help arrange the students.*

Two of you will get a ball. Your job is to listen carefully while I read a short description of a situation. After I read, decide if the situation is describing a good steward of God's creation or not. If it is, throw the ball to someone else in the circle. If it isn't, pass the ball to the person on your right. Then I'll read another activity and so on.

Pass out the two balls. Read the situations on the Being a Good Steward teacher's guide one at a time to the

students. Have the students pass the balls as you go down the list.

Great job making decisions about creation stewardship! Now let's talk about why these situations were showing good stewardship or not. You can go back to your seats.

Read the situations again, discussing why they are or are not showing good stewardship according to God's Word. Discuss the brief explanation listed with each situation on the teacher's guide.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

When it comes to being good stewards of God's creation, we should remember this main point: worship the Creator, not the creation. And remember to honor and glorify God first in our enjoyment and protection of His creation.

God created everything in the universe for our benefit to be used and managed wisely. We need to do the best we can at preserving it without allowing it to become an idol in our lives.



READ THE WORD

Genesis 8:20–9:1

Some people think that humans are destroying the earth because we are doing things to cause global warming. We can count on the Bible to have all the answers to what is going on in the world. Let's turn back to Genesis. We'll read Genesis 8:20–9:1.

Can I have a volunteer to start reading these verses out loud please? Everyone follow along because I'm going to call on someone different to read each verse. *Have students read verses. Call on random students to read each verse until entire passage has been read.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

So, what does this have to do with global warming, climate change, and whether we are going to destroy the earth by our lifestyles? Let's see.

Observe the Text

? Who are the characters in this passage? *Noah and God.*

Yes. God made a promise to Noah—about the earth—that has something to do with global warming and how concerned people are about it.

? Take a look at verse 21. What did the Lord promise there? Read it carefully. *God will never curse the ground for man's sake. God will never destroy every living thing again.*

? There is another promise in verse 22. What do you think verse 22 is saying? *Allow for discussion.*

God is confirming that the earth is His and He intends to keep it the way it is—with planting and harvesting, winter and summer, day and night—remaining the way He has created it to be. Nothing that happens to the climate, and nothing man can do, can change God's promise.

Discover the Truth

? Could this verse apply to global warming in any way? *Yes!*

Global warming and climate change are topics of great concern today. Some scientists are making claims that the earth's climate is warming at such a rate that serious changes in the earth will result. But we need to remember that God has promised to sustain His creation. He has told us to expect cycles in nature—that is how He designed the world! We can trust God to uphold His promise.

The weather cycles are part of God's plan for the earth. The earth is His and everything in it. We are merely called to care for it. He is the Creator, and He promises to be faithful in keeping it.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God created Adam and Eve and then gave them dominion—responsibility or rule over the earth. They were to take care of the garden and all the animals God put there. This dominion or rule was given as a privilege and responsibility. They were to take care of these things, use them for their good, and manage them well. God intended for man to live off the land. The dominion or responsibility that God gave to Adam has

been passed down to us. It is a very big responsibility that we all should take seriously.

Although caring for the earth and global warming are talked about a lot, and the temperatures of the earth have gone up and down over the past centuries, we know that God has promised to keep the earth as He wants it. And God is faithful to keep His promises. *Refer to Faithful on the Attributes of God poster.*

We all need to work at taking care of the earth according to God’s Word and in order to honor and glorify Him. We must never be so consumed with the earth that we forget God or Jesus Christ and the gospel. These are the things our minds need to be set on—even as we do our part to take care of our temporary home—planet earth.

GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

You will see things on TV and hear about it in school, from your friends, family, and neighbors—things about climate change and what we need to do to prevent it. A lot of people may seem very worried about it and concerned that we are destroying the world. I hope that you have a better understanding now. We ARE responsible to take care of the earth—God has given man dominion and authority over it, and He wants us to use it wisely. But God has promised to keep it as He wants it. And He is always faithful to His promises.

? Based on what we have talked about today, what could you say to a friend who is afraid the earth is being destroyed by humans? *Allow discussion.*

We don’t need to fear. The Bible says God is in control. He has promised not to let the earth be destroyed. He sustains His creation, which includes cycles like seasons, hot and cold, night and day.



MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for His wonderful creation and how He has promised to sustain it.
- Ask God to help us be good stewards of His creation according to His Word.