

Lesson 3 | September 19, 2021

Our Responsibility for God's Creation

Study Text

Genesis 1:28–31; 2:15,19–20; 9:1–3,8–11; Psalms 8:1–9; 24:1–2; 89:11; 145:13–17

Central Truth

God values His creation and commands us to care for it.

Key Verse: Genesis 2:15

The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (KJV).

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand that God's creation testifies to His love for and continual care for humanity.
- • Students will develop a growing appreciation for the wondrous complexity of God's creation and how He desires our participation in the care of it.
- • Students will live as people of God who understand that we have a responsibility to care for the creation He has made.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: Often things we receive as gifts are not valued. We might be happy to receive them, but because we have nothing invested in receiving them, they can be taken for granted and treated quite carelessly. Imagine purchasing your first car. It was only a couple hundred dollars, yet you worked a whole summer to pay for it. Because you invested yourself into it, you were thrilled to spend time cleaning and waxing it, and fixing anything that was broken or worn out.

Opening Activity—Handle With Care

Ask. *“Have you taken a special interest in caring for something throughout the course of your life? What did you do to take care of it? Did your interest in caring for it wane over time, or did it continue? Examples may include a car, house, first apartment, or many other things. Be prepared with your own example to help get the discussion started if needed.*

Say: Our gratefulness for the things we receive, especially if they are gifts, often impacts our desire to care for them. Our care for them is often proportional to the time and energy it took to obtain them. It is easy to take something for granted if we have not

invested ourselves into it. (Share your highlights from the following text.) (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Scripture often describes creation in terms of a gift to humanity. Even so, God expects us to honor and obey Him in caring for His creation. To the first humans, God said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground” (Genesis 1:28, NLT). He placed them in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it (2:15). By involving themselves in the care of creation, Adam and Eve lived out the reality that this was both a gift from God as well as a task assigned to humanity by God. They would honor God by caring for and investing their energy into the gift He had given.

Have you ever wondered what we will be doing in heaven? Work was not Adam’s punishment. We will not be on a timeline. We will worship God.

Part 1—Caretakers of Creation Stewardship of God’s Creation

Genesis 1:28; 2:15,19–20

[Gen 1:28-31 KJV] 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

[Gen 2:15, 19-20 KJV] 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. ... 19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought [them] unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that [was] the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Say: Some believe that work is a consequence of the Fall because God said Adam would grow food “by the sweat of your brow,” speaking of the difficulty with which food would be grown (Genesis 3:19, NLT). But that was not the first indication that Adam would work. From the very beginning, God gave humanity the job of caring for His creation, even though it may not have “felt” like work. A teenager might spend hours washing and waxing a new car. That teen is enjoying what might otherwise be considered work. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Genesis 1:28 recounts God's commandment to Adam and Eve: "God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground'" (NLT).

Perhaps the key word in this verse is "blessed." Creation was a gift and blessing to Adam and Eve, and it continues to be a blessing for humanity today. The creation is there for humanity, but in a very real sense, humanity is also called to "be there" for creation. **God expected humanity, who had been created in His image, to practice stewardship of His creation (verses 26–27). This stewardship included the responsibility to use the gift of creation to fulfill God's purposes. God expected them to rule (Hebrew radah, meaning to exercise dominion) over it all. Adam and Eve were given the task of stewarding God's creation.**

Genesis 2:15 further identifies that Adam exercised this role in the Garden of Eden. **Then, verses 19–20 record that the need for man to not be alone was in part why certain animals were created. They did not, however, solve Adam's need for a helper. That need, of course, would be met through Eve. And so Adam named the animals, as part of his role of steward. This was followed by the creation of Eve, who would join Adam in tending to and watching over God's gift.**

Discuss

? Even before the Fall, Adam and Eve were given work to do with respect to creation. How does this impact our concept of work?

? How might the command to rule creation impact the way we look at environmental issues and other matters of caring for the earth?

God's Provision: Flora and Fauna for Food

Genesis 1:29–30

[Gen 1:29-30 KJV] 29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which [is] the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein [there is] life, [I have given] every green herb for meat: and it was so.

Say: God's creation of the world was well-planned. He knew He was going to create humanity, and He created everything we would need before creating the first humans. Nothing happened by accident. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God's creation included His provision for humanity. Creation, including plants and animals, were given for food (Genesis 1:29–30). Some debate that this phrase applies only to plant life and hold that the first human pair were vegetarians. Such an interpretation ignores that fact that it appears after describing both the plant life of creation and the animal life. The repetition emphasizes the inclusiveness of God's creation given to sustain life for humanity. And so, while people hold personal reasons for adhering to vegetarianism, Scripture does clearly indicate that meat was a part of God's provision (see also Genesis 9:1–3)..

Discuss

? Do you think, given the poverty that exists globally, that there is enough food for all humanity inhabiting the earth? Explain your answer.?

? At what point would you say humanity becomes exploitive of God's creation, both plants and animals?

Resource Packet Item 1: Caring for God's Creation

Distribute the work sheet and give students a few minutes to complete it. Then discuss their answers. Talk about different perspectives Christians might have on what it means to be stewards of and rule over creation.

Part 2—Stewards Over God's Works

God Values Humanity

Psalm 8:1–9

[Psa 8:1-9 KJV] 1 [[To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.]] O LORD our Lord, how excellent [is] thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all [things] under his feet: 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, [and whatsoever] passeth through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent [is] thy name in all the earth!

Say: God values humanity—not only the human race as a whole, but each individual. When He created human beings in His own image, He crowned them with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5, NLT), and He gave them authority over all of creation. However, **as with any position of authority and honor, that position also came with responsibility.** The earth and all that is in it is to be cared for. Each of us carries the responsibility to respect and value each other and to be good stewards of creation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

A proper biblical view of humanity, both our blessings and our responsibilities, is rooted in a proper sense of how God sees humanity. Psalm 8 makes it clear that God values human life, and we must value life as well. Then, from that sense of godly value, we can better understand the value we should have for the rest of creation.

Psalm 8 has been called a creation psalm. After speaking of the majesty of God’s name in all the earth and His glory above the heavens (verse 1), David turned to the subject of creation. **He called the heavens God’s handiwork, and the placement of moon and stars the result of His choice (verse 3). This verse gives us a picture of the greatness of God. If we think of the vastness of outer space and the enormous number of stars and planets that fill it, the picture David painted becomes clear. Moon, stars, and planets in space reveal the greatness of the God who created them.**

These heavenly bodies can make humans seem very small by comparison. Human beings occupy one planet. Some scientists think that millions of planets exist in our universe. This leads to the thought of verse 4. **Since humans are so small compared to the rest of the universe, how can God in His splendor and greatness want to pay any attention to them? How can He care for them?**

Yet God does care about humans. God made man “a little lower than the angels” (verse 5, KJV). Although scholars debate what specifically this means, the message is clear: **God made humanity at a level higher than animals and He crowned humanity with glory and honor.**

Consequently, if God views humans so highly, Christians are to do no less. Some in our world view humanity as simply the highest form of animal life. Any believer inclined to consider such a perspective needs to take note. God shows extremely high regard for human life. We are the crowning jewel of creation. No human should be less than respectful of it either.

From this biblical perspective on humanity, we can move on to verse 6, which reminds us of what some describe as “God’s appointment of humanity as governor of His creation.” **We maintain order, and we “shine a light” on the glories of what God has made. Thus, we are not under the control of creation; we must not view it as a god to be worshiped or as a taskmaster that rules our actions. Rather, we are to**

view it as a precious jewel to be guarded and maintained and put on display, as it were. The glory of God is seen in creation, and we, as those who rule over creation, are to ensure that His glory is not hidden.

Discuss

? In what different ways can we show respect for human life?

? How can a Christian demonstrate to the world how God's glory is seen in creation?

Resource Packet Item 2: The Value of Human Life

Distribute the discussion sheet and choose one or more of the issues to discuss as a class. Or, divide your class into small groups and assign each issue to a different group, then have them report on their discussion.

God's Covenant With Humanity and the Earth

Genesis 9:1–3,8–11

[Gen 9:1-3, 8-11 KJV] 1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth [upon] the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. ... 8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10 And with every living creature that [is] with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. 11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

Say: Adam and Eve were not the only humans to receive God's instructions to care for the earth He had placed under the authority of humanity. After the earth became so wicked that all of its creatures were destroyed by the Flood except those protected in the ark with Noah, He again gave similar instructions. He never rescinded those instructions, so we can conclude that we too have responsibility for God's creation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After leaving the ark, Noah built an altar to the Lord (Genesis 8:20). There Noah offered a burnt offering from every clean animal and every clean bird. Through Noah and his sons the human race was to start over again. Like Adam and Eve before them, they were commanded to populate the earth (9:1). In addition, God

affirmed the responsibility He had previously placed upon humanity to care for the rest of creation.

Verse 2 is an interesting verse, as it seems to indicate that the relationship between humans and animals (as a particular aspect of creation) changed after the Flood to something more antagonistic. Animals would now fear humans, indicating that this may not have been the case before the Flood. It would be amid this kind of setting, going forward, that humans and animals would coexist.

From there, God moved forward to confirm what is known as the “Noachian Covenant,” God’s covenant with Noah, which would extend forward throughout time in this world. **Notice that all of creation—all that is living—is included in this covenant. In Genesis 9:1–17, reference is made to “the earth” nearly a dozen times, a reminder of God’s concern for all that He created (see, for example, verse 13).**

What, then, are we as believers to make of this covenant? How are we to reflect upon and act according to this covenant? Once again, we cannot help but see our own place in creation—ruling over all that God has made. But we also cannot lose sight of the value God has placed on creation. This truth, and its significance, is the focus of our final Main Point.

Discuss

? What examples can you give of the fear that animals have for humans as mentioned in God’s message to Noah?

? How can Christians fulfill their God-given responsibility to care for the earth and its various creatures?

Part 3—God Values His Creation

God’s Creation Is “Very Good”

Genesis 1:31; Psalms 24:1–2, 89:11

[Gen 1:31 KJV] 31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, [it was] very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

[Psa 24:1-2 KJV] 1 [[A Psalm of David.]] The earth [is] the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

[Psa 89:11 KJV] 11 The heavens [are] thine, the earth also [is] thine: [as for] the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

Say: Often, when we think of creation, we think only of the early chapters of Genesis. But many of the psalms refer to creation. We must remember that the psalms were meant to be sung in worship of God, either corporately or by individuals. Creation caused people to want to worship God because His creation was “very good.” (Share your highlights from the following text.)

On multiple occasions throughout Genesis 1, we are told that God referred to a particular part of His creation as “good.” It is not surprising, then, that upon the completion of creation, God declares the whole to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God’s creation has innate value, and that value should lead His people to praise Him for what He has made (see Psalm 104:24; 1 Timothy 4:3–4).

Psalm 24 is familiar to many Christians, and it serves as a powerful declaration that God, the Creator, is holy and glorious. Verses 1–2 affirm God as the One who is Ruler of the universe, by virtue of His supreme role as Creator. Verse 2, especially, speaks to the wisdom with which He created and the ongoing provision He gives to sustain what He has made. The underlying message is clear: **Creation is special. It is unique. In it we see the power and creativity of God, and the sight of creation ought to compel us to worship Him and recognize Him for who He is.**

Moving forward in the Psalms, Psalm 89 focuses on the covenant that the Lord made with David—and the promise of the new covenant that was to be fulfilled in the Son of David, Jesus Christ. In verses 1 and 2, the psalmist sings and declares God’s chesed, a difficult Hebrew word to translate. (As we read the Old Testament, we can often see it in words like “lovingkindness,” “mercy,” or “steadfast love”; it is a word often used to describe God’s covenant love for and loyalty to His people.) So, we need to keep this in mind as we look at verse 11. This verse declares God’s full ownership of and sovereignty over creation—a sovereignty that was established at creation. His chesed, then, extends to creation as well as to His people (with humanity as the crowning jewel of creation). God values creation and will one day restore it to its previous glory prior to the Fall (see Romans 8:18–23).

[Rom 8:18-23 KJV] 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected [the same] in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only [they], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, [to wit], the redemption of our body.

Discuss

? What can we conclude from Genesis 1:31 saying that God saw creation as “very good”?

? How does Psalm 89:11 prompt you to worship God?

God Acts on Behalf of His Creation

Psalm 145:13–17

[Psa 145:13-17 KJV] 13 Thy kingdom [is] an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion [endureth] throughout all generations. 14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all [those that be] bowed down. 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. 16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD [is] righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Say: There are people who believe in the existence of God, but do not believe He continues to be active in His creation. Instead, they believe that God created the world and set it into motion, but did not interact with it after that time. How grateful we can be that God does continue to interact with His creation, including us as the crowning glory of His creation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Psalm 145:13 highlights God’s faithfulness and fidelity, qualities that are part of His nature. Such glorious words provide hope for God’s people of every generation. We can wholly trust His promises—including the hope of redemption. He will uphold those who falter and lift those who are bowed and broken (verse 14). David knew brokenness; he experienced burdens. We can sense his joy, even as we ourselves rejoice in the Lord.

God also provides tangibly for His people, and for every living thing He has created (verse 16). This, too, speaks to His lofty position as faithful King. God’s ability to sustain His own is at times seen through miraculous intervention. **Yet God’s provision is also seen through the cycles of nature and the change of seasons. This understanding of God’s providence is seen later, in the Lord’s Prayer, as Jesus encouraged us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11, KJV).**

In Psalm 145:17, David further elaborated by saying that God is righteous, and He is near. These two come together to provide a powerful sense of hope in Him. He acts on behalf of His people, and His actions are always righteous: They restore, redeem, and vindicate. And so, we can trust God to act rightly toward us, as we—His creation—find joy and peace in His presence.

Discuss

? Share examples of times in your life when God has supernaturally met your needs for tangible things such as food and shelter.?

? How frequently are you aware of the nearness of God to you? What can you do to be more aware of His presence in your life?

Resource Packet Item 3: A Psalm of Praise

Distribute the work sheet “A Psalm of Praise,” encouraging students to write their own psalms or songs to worship God, emphasizing His creation. Invite students to share their work with the class..

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: God values all of creation, which of course includes us as the crowning jewel of His creation. He created us in His image and gave us the honor and responsibility of caring for other created things. He demonstrates our value to Him by providing the air we breathe and the food we eat. Most of all, He demonstrates our value to Him by giving His Son Jesus to deliver us from sin.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Explore the interest of groups at your church in adopting a section of highway to clean up.
- Consider creating a group to recycle materials that will benefit creation and, perhaps, become a fundraiser for a ministry.
- Plan an environmental trip to do something related to the environment. (For example, you might take a youth group to clean up a park, walking trail, or lake shore.)

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Laws To Care for Land.
Exodus 23:10–12

[Exo 23:10-12 KJV] 10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: 11 But the seventh [year] thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, [and] with thy oliveyard. 12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

Tuesday:

Provision for God’s People.
Leviticus 25:18–24

[Lev 25:18-24 KJV] 18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. 19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. 20 And if

ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: 21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. 22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat [yet] of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat [of] the old [store]. 23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land [is] mine; for ye [are] strangers and sojourners with me. 24 And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

Wednesday:

God Values Animals.
Psalm 104:19–30

[Psa 104:19-30 KJV] 19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep [forth]. 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25 [So is] this great and wide sea, wherein [are] things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26 There go the ships: [there is] that leviathan, [whom] thou hast made to play therein. 27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give [them] their meat in due season. 28 [That] thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

Thursday:

God Provides for His Creation.
Matthew 6:25–34

[Mat 6:25-34 KJV] 25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take

therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day [is] the evil thereof.

Friday:

Care for Our Bodies.
1 Corinthians 6:18–20

[1Co 6:18-20 KJV] 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Saturday:

God Defends Creation.
Revelation 11:16–18

[Rev 11:16-18 KJV] 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.