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further

**Loving Environmentalists No
Matter What**

Love. No Matter What

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Proverbs 19:11 (TPT)

A wise person demonstrates patience, for mercy means holding your tongue. When you are insulted, be quick to forgive and forget it, for you are virtuous when you overlook an offense.
(Memorize)

When it comes to the topic of environmentalism, there seems to be as many opinions about what should be done in regard to the environment as there are humans on earth! As with everything else, a Christian should avoid the extreme views of this subject and maintain a balanced, Biblical approach to how we use God's creation. On one hand, you have those who believe that God is in all of creation and all of creation is God (pantheism) which elevates the creation to the same place as the creator. On the other hand, you have those who believe that anything on earth that can be used to make a buck should be used however; it needs to be used to make that profit, regardless of the effect on the environment. God created us with a good measure of common sense (well, most people). Taking the common sense approach of using what God has created for us while at the same time not abusing it for our own selfish purposes is a wise way to approach this issue.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE –
SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISUSS.**

Genesis 1:28 (NIV)

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

1. From the above passages, Christians say that God has made humanity stewards of God's creation. What do you think that means? Do you think that these passages give humans the authority to do anything at all with God's creation? As stewards of God's creation, what do you think are things we should and should not do with our environment? From your observations, what do you think are ways that we are abusing God's creation as humans? Are there things that people claim are abuses of nature but you feel are ways that God intended us to use nature? What are they?

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2. Many in the modern environmental movement see climate change as the most important issue facing mankind because if we destroy this planet, we will have nowhere to go since we do not yet have the technology to find, much less go to, another planet. Do you agree with this position? Do you think that making sure that this planet survives is as important as many environmentalists believe? Read the following passages in your group: 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 51:6. What does God say is the future of the earth? What should we take from this as believers?

3. Another branch of the environmental movement claims that all species are equal on planet earth. Do you agree with this? Read Genesis 1: 26-28. What does scripture say about this idea? Some who believe this go as far as to say that we should not eat animals for food or use their skins for clothing. Do you agree with this? Read Genesis 3:21 and 9:1-3. What does God say about this?

4. Because some of the positions that are taken in the environmental movement obviously contradict what scripture teaches, many Christians simply write these people off as kooks. Do you think this is a wise position for a Christian to take? Why or why not? Are there things that environmentalists say we should do that would actually fit in with being stewards of God's creation? What are some things we should be doing for the environment as Christians?

Answer – There are many things that environmentalists suggest that are actually great things we could do. Recycling is obviously a good practice. Restricting certain activities that literally destroy entire ecosystems, such as the rainforests of the world, would be prudent. Restricting the use of chemicals that poison the environment and cause cancer in people only makes sense. There are many positive things we can learn from environmentalists about caring for creation. They are not all kooks. Some are, but not all, by any measure.

Romans 1:21-25 (NIV)

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

5. From the above passage, what mistake are some of the people in the environmental movement making? Have you ever noticed a spiritual aspect to the environmental movement such as references to Mother Earth or Gaia? Read Isaiah 44:15-20. Do you think this is a description of what these people are doing? In verse 20, what does it say these people are unable to do since they are so deceived?

MAKING IT PRACTICAL (OPTIONAL)

Below are some practical exercises to help you have a Biblical view of environmentalism.

Level 1 Challenge: If you know people who are very much into environmentalism, thank them for their concern for all of our well-being. Then tell them you are concerned with their spiritual well-being as well and share the gospel with them.

Level 2 Challenge: Begin to be a better steward of your environment. Do not litter, recycle if it is possible, do not be wasteful of the resources with which God has blessed you.

Level 3 Challenge: Consider volunteering as a group in an activity that improves the environment such as picking up trash along a highway, cleaning up an abandoned lot, etc.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

PRAY for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

PONDER YOUR PROGRESS after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what did not. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment.

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Going Further is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We have designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is more important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as, "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spend 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately, as part of your accountability to the group, you want to commit to personal life change.
- Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessing of success.

