



CREATION CARE: A BIBLICAL IMPERATIVE

We are all doing what we can to look after the environment. Climate change is just one of the issues that concern us. Every day new stories emerge about pollution, destruction or mismanagement of ecosystems that drive biodiversity loss and human suffering. Have we taken time to think about why we care for creation as Christians? What does the Bible have to say about our relationship to the non-human parts of creation? How can we have hope in the face of all this bad news?

This session will help you to explore a theology of creation care that can provide a basis for our preaching, worship and wider ministry on this topic. The activities are designed to last about an hour, and were adapted by Dr Ruth Bancewicz from [Test of FAITH: Science and Christianity Unpacked - Leaders Guide](#) (Paternoster, 2009), with a video from the [Wonders of the Living World](#) project.

This can be used in a Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Meeting as CLPD¹ or as part of a study day. Resources for further learning and action are recommended at the end of the session.

Outline

1. **Setting the Scene:** we open in prayer and watch a video from a biblical scholar and creation care activist (10 minutes).
2. **A Theology of Creation Care:** we explore the Bible together, discussing in small groups and sharing our findings (40 minutes).
3. **Closing:** hymn, quiet reflection and prayer (10 minutes)
4. **Follow-up:** recommended resources for study and action



Optional:
computer
& internet

[The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion](#) is a Cambridge-based interdisciplinary research institute with a Christian ethos. Dr Ruth Bancewicz, whose scientific specialism is Genetics, is part of their public outreach team - as the Church Engagement Director.

¹ Continuing Local Preacher Development.

1. SETTING THE SCENE

Open in prayer, asking for wisdom and insight as we consider the biblical background to this topic in order to fuel our ministry in the coming years.

Watch [this video](#) (downloadable) from Old Testament scholar Dr Hilary Marlow, or read the transcript (page 4). You may wish to provide copies of the transcript for those at the meeting.

Explain that we will now unpack these ideas in a little more detail, as well as looking at our source of hope for both now the future.



10 mins

Optional:



Computer

2. Developing Our Theology of Creation Care

Divide into two groups, A and B. In groups, consider each of the four topics in turn, reading the assigned passages and using the questions to stimulate discussion.

Depending on time available and group size, you may wish to share the findings of each group together with the whole group, or to ask each group for a single poignant observation they have made in conversation.

If time is short, you may choose to allocate just one of the first three topics to each group, and ask them to appoint a spokesperson to (briefly) report back. Then topic four can be discussed altogether.

The key is to get conversation going, and to make the links between scripture and the real-world situation, and to unpack how we can respond as preachers, whose task is to relate the Word to the world where we live.



40 mins



Bibles

i) God's purpose for creation

A. Ps 98:4-9, Ps 19:1-4a. What is the non-human creation doing?

B. Gen 1:26-30, 2:15. What does God command us to do?

ii) The putrefied world

A. Gen 3:8-10, 12, 17. What is the chain of broken relationships here?

B. Jer 12:4, Hos 4:1-3. What are the consequences of human sin?

iii) The purified world

A. Col 1: 15-20. What was and is Jesus' role in creation?

B. Rom 8: 19-23. What will ultimately happen to the non-human creation? (*Hint: renewal*)

Optional Extra. 2 Peter 3:10-13. If creation is renewed, what might the fire here refer to? (*Hint: judgment and purification*).

iv) How can we have hope for today, and for the future?

(Hint: Restored relationships mean that we can work with God's help to heal creation today, and that complete renewal will come in the future.)

Optional Extra. What do you think of this series of passages and points, as a way to explain our theology of creation care?

3. CLOSING

Sing, read or watch the new hymn *Hear the song of our lament* by Resound Worship.

Words, video and music can be found at [https://www.resoundworship.org/song/hear the song of our lament](https://www.resoundworship.org/song/hear_the_song_of_our_lament)

Spend a few minutes silently reflecting on our hope in God to help us care for his creation.

Finish with a prayer for wisdom and love in caring for creation.



10 mins



Computer



Internet
Access

4. TAKING IT FURTHER

Hilary Marlow, [*The Earth is the Lord's: A biblical response to environmental issues*](#) (Grove booklets, 2008)

For information about creation care organisations and material in a range of different formats, explore the [Creation: Care & Enjoy](#) section on the Faraday Institute Church resources pages.

There are many [lectures on this topic](#) in the multimedia section of the Faraday website.

Take a look at these [recommended resources](#) for outdoor worship.

Transcript of video of Dr Hilary Marlow:

One of the really interesting things that comes up time and time again in the Old Testament is a sense that there's a series of interconnections between God, humanity, and the rest of creation that are playing out all the time, and in an ideal world those connections work really well, and the land flourishes, people flourish and God is worshipped by both human and non-human creation. But so often what you find in the Bible is actually that one or more of those connections has been broken in some way, and particularly the connection between God and people and also the connection between people and the natural world, and what you often find is when the people's relationship - the Israelites' relationship with God is not at its best, then there's a knock-on effect in the natural world. That knock-on effect in some of the prophets is often described using the language of the land or the earth mourning, being sorrowful, because something has gone wrong in the people's relationship with God and in human society.

So there's very strong sense of this three-way connection that is broken, and it's often broken at the initiation of human beings. We see it in Genesis 3, see it also for example in the story of Cain and Abel. Cain rises up and kills his brother Abel and then has to give account of his actions to God, and we learn there that the land is - the blood of Abel cries out from the land because Cain has shed blood, and it's polluted the earth. We read also in some of the prophets like the book of Hosea that when the people forget God (this is in Hosea chapter 4) when the people forget God, society suffers, there's bloodshed, there's murder, there's adultery increasing in society, and also the land mourns. Hosea extends that mourning to the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. They're all perishing, says Hosea in chapter 4, because of the sin of the people.

This is a very profound way of thinking about the world, that it is a connected whole. It's not just humans in their little bubble, and the natural world as perhaps just the landscape out of which human history plays out. It's much more integrated, in fact I think that the biblical authors were anticipating what we would now call the science of ecology. We know that we are connected with the natural world. Like it or not, we cannot live in isolation from it. We can choose to live beneficially with nature, or we can choose to live harmfully. So often, I think in the past 200 years, we've chosen to live harmfully and that's been to the great detriment of the environment. So I think that this strong connection between human beings and the natural world is present there in the Bible, and of course because the Bible is a God-centred book, a theocentric book, God takes prime place in that series of interconnections.