

A LIFE THAT COUNTS
#7: The Stewardship of the Earth
November 25-27, 2006

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will certainly die.” *Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17 TNIV*

¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. *Romans 8:19-21 TNIV*

Introduction: As we conclude our study of the Christian doctrine of Stewardship—“the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care” (Webster's)—let's consider the stewardship of the earth, or “creation care.” For too long, the Evangelical church has ignored this important issue, but the state of our environment is condemning our complacency. We must love the earth because God created it and placed it in under our care.

- I. “Creation Care,” NOT Environmentalism
 - A. Environmentalism is rooted in the love of the earth.
 - B. Creation Care is rooted in Christian stewardship.

- C. “Deep-Ecology” views the earth as sacrosanct and human activity as disruptive to its ecology.

The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves . . . Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

From “The Foundation for Deep Ecology Platform.”

- D. “Creation Care” views the earth as God's creation placed within humanity's care.

Because clean air, pure water and adequate resources are crucial to public health and civic order government has an obligation to protect its citizens from the effects of environmental degradation.

*From “The Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility”
signed by James Dobson, Chuck Colson, and others.*

- E. But Christians can still learn from environmentalists!
- II. Tending the Garden, NOT Just Using It
 - A. God created the heavens and the earth for His glory.
 - B. Humanity is the crowning achievement of God's creation. (Genesis 1:31)
 - C. Human beings have been “given” the earth as stewards. (Gen. 1 and 2)
 - D. We were placed in “the garden” in order to “work it and take care of it.” (v.15)
 - III. Redeeming Creation, NOT Just Recycling It
 - A. God's creation eagerly awaits the revelation of those who truly love God and God's handiwork. (Rom. 8:19)
 - B. God's design of creation—with free human beings as its caretakers—subjects the earth to futility. (v.20)
 - C. But's God's plan involves redemption, or the certain hope that God's children will liberate creation from the bondage of decay. (v.21)
 - D. Granted, Paul's comments are spiritual in nature, but they should be reflected in our redeemed lifestyles, which should display good stewardship.

Conclusion: Creation care is a vital component of responsible stewardship. We love and redeem the earth not for its own sake, but because it is God's precious handiwork.