



CREATION CARE

AN INTRODUCTION for busy pastors

EVANGELICALS & SCIENTISTS UNITED TO PROTECT CREATION

CREATION CARE

Dear Pastor,

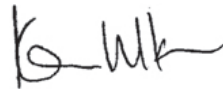
You may have heard of a growing interest among evangelical pastors to address global environmental problems with the power of biblical truth, called "Creation Care." There is a growing consensus among evangelicals, business leaders, the U.S. Congress and the White House that steps must be taken to address these issues. Prominent scientists have agreed to refer to the earth as "the creation" based on a realization that a "spiritual and cultural transformation" is needed to respond effectively.

Sorting fact from fiction on the environment isn't always easy; we realize some of these issues have been affected by the political and cultural divides of our day, obscuring the biblical mandate to care for creation as responsible stewards. We are excited by the wisdom and power of the Spirit that can be brought to bear on this global challenge. We believe that as pastors like yourself become familiar with the facts of the matter, the gospel will make a real impact for good on God's good earth. Please review these materials and decide for yourself.

Sincerely,



Joel Hunter
Senior Pastor
Northland--A Church Distributed



Ken Wilson
Senior Pastor
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Rev. Richard Cizik D.Min., M.Div.
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For Evangelicals and Scientists United to Protect Creation

CREATION CARE

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

From a biblical perspective, “the environment” is God’s creation. Creation care does not just mean caring for “nature,” apart from humanity. It means caring for the entire creation: the environment and “all creatures great and small” including humanity.

As those who confess Jesus Christ to be Savior and Lord, our relationship with all of creation must be in keeping with Christ’s relationship with all of creation. When we explore what the Bible says about creation, we interpret each text in light of our relationship to Christ and his relationship to all of creation. If the Bible teaches us that Christ has created the universe, gives it life and sustains it, and has reconciled everything to God, then our actions should participate in Christ’s creating, sustaining, and reconciling work.

Jesus Christ’s Relationship to All of Creation: *Creator, Sustainer, Reconciler, Consummator, True Image of God, Heir of All Things, Lord*

Creation is a sacred trust having been created through and for Christ. (All scriptures are from the New International Version of Scripture.)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Col. 1:15-20)

Also see Also see 1Cor 8:6b; Eph 1:10; Heb 1:2-3; Jn 1:1-3.

Creation Declares the Glory of God

The entire creation is valuable as a revelation of God's invisible nature.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." (Ps 19:1-4)

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse..." (Rom 1: 20-23)

Also see Ps 96:1, 11-12; Rev 4-11.

The Earth Is the Lord's

The entire creation ultimately belongs to God and not to us.

"To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." (Deut 10:14)

Also see Heb 1:2; Ps 24:1; Lev 25:23; 1Chron 29:11-12; Neh 9:6; Col 1:16b; 1Cor 10:26; Is 66:1-2.

God Lovingly Provides for His Creation

God values the entire creation and seeks to care for it.

"God makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for humans to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted..." (Ps 104: 10-30)

"Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed." (Exod 23:12)

Also see Lev 25:1-7; Job 38:39-41; 39: 5-8; Gen 1:20-25; 6:19-21; 9:8-17:9.

Humans Serve as Stewards of the Creation

Humans have a divine responsibility to care for God's creation on His behalf.

"The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food... The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it... Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field." (Gen 2:7-9a, 15, 19-20a)

Also see 2Chron 7:13-14; Gen 1:25-31; 2:1; Ps 65:1, 9-13; 104:13-15, 21-24.

The Relationship Between Environmental Problems and Christian Love and Justice

Environmental problems like pollution of the air and water, loss of entire species, and the warming of the earth's climate, harm people, especially the most vulnerable among us. Air pollution harms the urban poor; the loss or scarcity of entire species hurts those who depend on them; flooding in coastal regions threatens the poor who live there. Since the problems are global in scale, we may not be as adversely affected as those in other parts of the world, especially the less fortunate. But Christ's love compels us to be concerned for our neighbor's well being.

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness..."
(Phil 2:4-8)

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me...'"
(Matt 25:34-45)

Also see Ps 72:1, 12-14a; Mic 6:1-4, 7-8; Luke 6:31; 1Jn 4:7-8; John 13:34; Luke 4:18-19; 2Cor 5: 14-21; Col 1:20; Jer 22:3; Matt 22:37-40.

We Will Answer to God for Our Care of Creation

Our individual and corporate actions can lead to harming God's creation. We are accountable to God for these actions.

"The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth."
(Rev 11:18)

Also see Hosea 4:1-3, Isa 24:5-6, Gen 3:17.

God's Future Kingdom: A New Creation

Our destiny is not to be separated from the earth in a disembodied, purely spiritual existence, but to live in a renewed and redeemed creation. In the Bible, life begins in a garden and culminates in a garden city. In the same way that we are to care for our mortal bodies because they are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for the earth, because it is to become the dwelling place of God.

"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. . . Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert." (Isa 35:1-2)

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. . . They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. . . The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD." (Isa 65:17-23)

Also see Rev 31:1, 5; Rom 8: 19-23; Isa 11:1-9; 55:12-13.

[adapted from www.creationcare.org]

CREATION CARE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why should Christians care about the environment?

1. Because it's God's creation!
2. Because Jesus lived and died and lives again to redeem all of creation.
3. Because God is love and empowers us to love what he loves.
4. Because a damaged environment harms the most vulnerable among us.

What is "creation care"?

Creation care means caring for all of God's creation by stopping and preventing activities that are harmful (e.g. polluting the air and water) and participating in activities that further Christ's reconciliation of all of creation to God.

What have Christian leaders said about creation care?

Below are quotations from a few leaders speaking on creation care:

"If I am going to be in the right relationship with God, I should treat the things he has made in the same way he treats them."

(Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*)

"I find myself becoming more and more an advocate of the true ecologists where their recommendations are realistic. Many of these people have done us an essential service in helping us preserve and protect our green zones and our cities, our water and our air."

(Billy Graham)

"The growing possibility of our destroying ourselves and the world with our own neglect and excess is tragic and very real."

(Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats*)

“Christian people should surely have been in the vanguard of the movement for environmental responsibility, because of our doctrines of creation and stewardship. Did God make the world? Does he sustain it? Has he committed its resources to our care? His personal concern for his own creation should be sufficient to inspire us to be equally concerned.”

(John R.W. Stott, from the introduction to *Under the Bright Wings*)

“For he has raised everywhere, in all places and in all things, his ensigns and emblems, under blazons so clear and intelligible that no one can pretend ignorance in not knowing such a sovereign Lord ... It is evident that all creatures, from those in the firmament to those which are in the center of the earth, are able to act as witnesses and messengers of his glory to all men.... For the little birds that sing, sing of God; the beasts clamor for him; the elements dread him, the mountains echo him, the mountains and flowing waters cast their glances at him, and the grass and flowers laugh before him.... Did he not, in short, render many things attractive to us, apart from their necessary use?”

(John Calvin, *Institutes*)

What about nature worship?

Nothing is clearer in Scripture: we are to worship only the Creator—never His creation. Indeed, one cannot fully worship the Creator and at the same time harm or destroy His creation, which was brought into being to glorify Him. Worshiping the Creator and caring for creation is all part of loving God. They are mutually reinforcing activities.

How are we to treat non-human creation?

Are not people more important?

Our relationship to the rest of creation is based on God’s relationship to it and how God wants us to behave towards it. The Bible proclaims that in the beginning God blessed the rest of creation and called it good. It exists to praise and glorify Him. Christ sustains all of creation and died to reconcile all of creation to God. In Christ’s future Kingdom the rest of creation will be transformed into a new earth (Rev 21:1). Thus, the Bible clearly teaches that God values the rest of creation tremendously.

The Bible also proclaims that human beings have a special role and a special responsibility in God's creation since we are created in God's image and have free will. Human beings are called to care for the rest of God's creation, not abuse or destroy it. We are called to considerate use of the creation, not abuse of the creation; inconsiderate use of creation harms God's other creatures as well as future generations.

[adapted from www.creationcare.org]

CREATION CARE

CLIMATE CHANGE

What the World's Leading Climate Scientists Are Saying

There is a scientific consensus that the earth is warming and that the warming is being caused mainly by human activity. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up to review the state of climate change science. Sir John Houghton, an evangelical and one of the leading climatologists in the world, co-chaired the scientific working group which reviewed studies by thousands of scientists. As a Christian, Houghton talks openly about the need to be transparent and honest with what science can and cannot say. He is convinced that climate change is real and due primarily to human activities.

As the complex science tracking this problem has accumulated, the scientific community has become more certain that human activity is causing the warming. In 2001 the IPCC report estimated the probability that human activity was the cause of the warming at 65%. In the most recent report (2007) this probability was increased to 90%.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says the following is known with virtual certainty: human activities are changing the composition of the earth's atmosphere; increasing levels of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since pre-industrial times are well documented and understood; these gases remain in the atmosphere for periods ranging from decades to centuries; increasing greenhouse gas concentrations tend to warm the planet (from www.epa.gov).

Why the Warming Trend is a Problem

The planet, like the human body, is fine-tuned to sustain human life. Even small changes in average global temperature can have big consequences in much the way that a person's health can be seriously affected by relatively small changes in body temperature.

For example, as average global temperatures rise, the ice covering land masses in Greenland and Antarctica melts leading to rising sea levels. The rising sea levels threaten those who live near coastal areas with increased flooding. Many of the world's poor are especially vulnerable.

As average night-time temperatures increase, mosquitoes extend their range, bringing insect-borne diseases like malaria to new areas. The increase in average temperature leads to more severe and widespread drought conditions; this is especially harmful in areas like Africa where the poor are already living with little margin for error. We are already witnessing these effects and they are likely to continue and get worse without actions to cut carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

In addition to the harm done to human beings, especially the world's vulnerable poor, animals which have adapted to local habitats are forced by climate changes to move into areas that cannot sustain them as well. This accelerates the loss of many species, which is already occurring at an alarming rate.

What the Executive Branch is Saying

After a period of questioning whether human activity was indeed the cause of the recent warming trend, the Bush Administration now agrees with the scientific consensus that climate change is happening and is being caused by human activity. President Bush has called climate change "a serious challenge" that requires good stewardship of the environment.

What Business Leaders Are Saying

Many business leaders in industries that would have to significantly reduce climate change emissions are saying it is time to take action. Recently, companies like General Electric, Caterpillar, Dupont, BP America (a petroleum company) and Alcoa have asked the Federal Government to place limits on greenhouse gas emissions.

What About Those Who Dispute the Scientific Consensus?

Virtually everyone agrees the earth is warming. Those who dispute the scientific consensus tend to disagree about the degree to which human activity contributes to the warming. Because the science is complex, and the probability that human activity is the cause has been estimated at 90%, it is understandable that some in the scientific community would interpret the scientific data differently. Prudence, however, suggests that we not ignore the widespread consensus that does exist.

Efforts to slow the warming trend focus on decreasing our use of fossil fuels like oil, coal and gas. From the perspective of biblical stewardship, limiting our use of fossil fuels makes sense whether or not the broad scientific consensus about global warming is justified. We know that the burning of fossil fuels harms the environment in other ways (like pollution) and that it is a non-renewable resource. It is well known that the burning of coal to generate electricity is especially harmful to the environment, leading to pollution that increases asthma rates, harms the unborn (through increased mercury levels in fish ingested by pregnant women) and releases harmful neurotoxins into the atmosphere putting one in six children born in the United States at risk for increased learning disabilities and memory loss. Apart from the pollution caused by burning fossil fuels, we owe it to future generations not to use these resources up at our current pace. In short, we should err on the side of considerate use, not abuse; we should err on the side of protection, not exploitation of God's creation.

Additional Benefits: National Security and Public Health

As leaders across the political spectrum have noted, national and economic security can be enhanced by reducing our dependence on foreign oil from unstable regions. Burning less oil and coal will also reduce pollution that harms human health, including the health of the most vulnerable among us, including the poor and the unborn.

[adapted from www.creationcare.org]

CREATION CARE

TEN STEPS anyone can take

In becoming better stewards of the environment, small steps go a long way.

1. The easiest “one thing” to do:

Replace five regular light bulbs with compact fluorescent energy saving bulbs. If every home in America did this, we could save energy equivalent to 21 coal burning power plants!

2. Reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Choose reusable products instead of disposables. Buy products with minimal packaging. Recycle paper, plastic, newspaper, and aluminum cans.

3. Insulate your home.

Add insulation to walls and roof, install weather stripping, and caulk windows. You could save more than 25 percent in heating costs.

4. Be thrifty with heating and cooling.

Turn down the heat at night or while away during the day, and aim for moderation with heating and cooling at all times.

5. Leave the car at home whenever you can.

Less driving means fewer emissions. Besides saving gasoline, walking and biking are great forms of exercise.

6. Buy energy-efficient products.

When it's time to buy a car, choose one that gives you the best gas mileage. Choose energy efficient appliances.

7. Turn down your appliances.

Set your water heater at 120 degrees to save energy, and wrap it in an insulating blanket if it is more than 5 years old. Buy low-flow showerheads to save water. Wash clothes in warm or cold water.

8. Don't leave the water running.

Remember to turn off the water when you're not using it. For example, while brushing your teeth, shampooing the dog, or soaping up your car, turn off the water until you actually need it for rinsing. You'll reduce your water bill and help to conserve a vital natural resource.

9. Get a report card from your utility company.

Many utility companies provide home energy audits to help consumers identify areas in their homes that may not be energy efficient. In addition, many utility companies offer rebate programs to help pay for the cost of energy-efficient upgrades.

10. Become an informed steward.

Learn more about environmental issues so that you can make wise choices and encourage public officials to do likewise.

CREATION CARE

TEN STEPS any church can take

1. Preach a “Creation Care” sermon series.

For sermon ideas and outlines, visit www.creationcareforpastors.com.

2. Adopt a formal church position statement on creation care.

The statement could empower the church to become more energy efficient and to incorporate principles of environmental stewardship into Christian discipleship.

3. Create a creation care small group to study environmental stewardship and provide leadership.

You will likely have several members in your congregation who are already interested and passionate about environmental issues.

4. Do a church energy audit.

Your state or local government energy or weatherization office may help you identify a local company or organization that performs audits. They may also have information on how to do your own audit.

5. Where possible, switch to high efficiency fluorescent lighting.

Fluorescent bulbs use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

6. Start a recycling program.

Check with your municipality to find out what kind of materials are recycled in your area. Set up collection bins at your church to increase recycling.

7. Reduce use of paper bulletins.

Provide an option for eBulletins via web or email.

8. Adopt a local park.

Participate in litter pickup, planting or tending flowers, raking and other tasks to enhance your park. Contact your city or local government to apply.

9. Distribute or sell compact fluorescent bulbs in church.

For ideas on how to involve your church, check out the ENERGY STAR “Change a Light, Change the World Campaign” (www.energystar.gov/joinCAL).

10. Distribute reusable shopping bags with your church logo to members of the congregation.

Each year billions of bags end up as ugly litter. Eventually they break down into tiny toxic bits, polluting our soil, rivers, lakes and oceans.

CREATION CARE FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

Facing the global environmental challenges of our day with a creation care approach has important implications for the advance of the gospel.

Creation Care Broadens the Scope and Appeal of the Gospel

When the public sees evangelical churches doing substantial and effective hands on ministry to the poor in their communities, the cause of the gospel is advanced. The same can occur when evangelicals advance creation care. To the skeptical observer of evangelical churches, the gospel is more clearly perceived as good news and good for the community.

Creation Care Demonstrates the Power of the Gospel to Address Global Concerns

In the 21st Century global concerns like terrorism, abject poverty, loss of regard for human life, slavery, and the degradation of the physical environment, are “closer to home” issues than ever before. If the power of the gospel is not perceived as effectively addressing these issues or bringing a truly prophetic voice to these problems, the cause of the gospel suffers. We are now in a unique moment in history, when leading environmental scientists are recognizing the need for a “spiritual and cultural transformation” to deal with the threats to creation. It’s a unique opportunity for the gospel to shine.

Creation Care Engages Emerging Generations for the Sake of the Gospel

Younger generations, including the largest generation in U.S. history, “the millennial generation,” are marked by a concern for the environment. At the same time they are subject to a sense of hopelessness that these problems can be effectively addressed in our time. Creation Care is a wonderful way to engage emerging generations with the hope of the gospel.

CREATION CARE THE NEXT STEP

Visit www.creationcareforpastors.com for more information and resources about creation care. There you can order the Creation Care Starter Kit for Pastors, which includes:

Saving God’s Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church’s Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship by Tri Robinson with Jason Chatraw (Ampelon Publishing, 2006, 160 pgs.) Written by an evangelical pastor who has applied these principles in his church.

Creation Care: An Introduction for Busy Pastors Booklet printed by Evangelicals & Scientists United to Protect Creation. (These can be ordered together or separately.)

CREATION CARE FURTHER STUDY MATERIALS

Recommended Books:

Berry, R.J. (Ed.), *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action* (InterVarsity Press, 2003) 213 pgs.

Bouma-Prediger, Steven, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (Engaging Culture), (Baker Academic, 2001), 240 pgs.

DeWitt, Calvin, *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues* (Issues in Christian Living), (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1994), 86 pgs.

Sleeth, J. Matthew, MD, *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action* (Chelsea Green/Zondervan, 2006), 216 pgs.

Van Dyke, Fred, et al, *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship* (InterVarsity Press, 1996) 214 pgs.

Resources on the Web:

A Rocha International: Christians in Conservation:

www.arocha.org. Scriptures, Churches packets, sermon notes and opportunities to get involved in local programs.

Au Sable Institute: www.ausable.org. Online papers on Biblical interpretations related to creation care, community programs and conference materials.

Caring for Creation: 52 Ways to Tread Lightly on God's Earth:

www2.nau.edu/religion/52ways.htm. Changes individuals can make to reduce their impact on the environment.

Evangelical Environmental Network: www.creationcare.org. Resources, scriptures, access to Christian declarations on the environment, fact sheets on environmental issues, suggestions on what to do, and archives and subscription information for *Creation Care Magazine*.

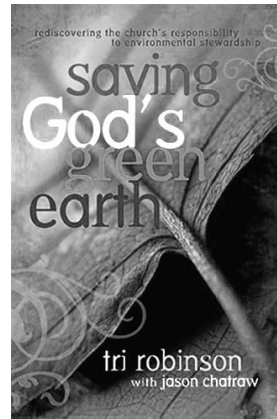
National Association of Evangelicals Re:Vision Project: www.revision.org.

In addition to issues of poverty and social justice important to the exercise of the Christian faith, resources on Christian engagement on the environment, the Biblical basis for such engagement, responses to frequent objections and recommendation for individual, church and community actions.

CREATION CARE WE RECOMMEND

Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship

by Tri Robinson with Jason Chatraw



Description

For hundreds of years, the church championed the beauty of God's creation, demonstrating in many ways how it points to the Creator. However, over the last century, the evangelical church has let the value of caring for creation slip away. Author and pastor Tri Robinson makes a compelling case for the biblical mandate behind environmental stewardship and shows the church what it can do about this eroding value.

Through sharing both his own personal story and the story of his church in response to environmental concerns, Robinson clearly shows how important this value is and how effective it is in showing others the Creator. Not only does Robinson inspire the reader to care for the environment, he reveals a clear pathway to making the value of environmental stewardship real in both the life of the reader and the Christian community in which he or she is involved.


About the Author

Tri Robinson is the founding pastor of the Vineyard Boise Church in Boise, Idaho, a growing fellowship of over 3,000. He has served on the national board for the Association of Vineyard Churches USA and as a regional overseer for more than 100 churches. With a strong teaching background that includes a Masters degree in administrative education, he is a sought-after conference speaker and passionate about transferring his working insights and experience on church leadership to a wide spectrum of churches. *[from www.amazon.com]*



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www.creationcareforpastors.com

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