

Theological Equipping Class: Environmentalism

Environmental Issues: Pollution, Resource Depletion, Environmental Degradation, Climate Change, Global Warming, Animals Rights, Endangered Species, etc.

Biblical Foundation

Creation:

Genesis 1:1, 31 – *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”*

- God is the Creator. All creation belongs to Him and is ruled by Him.
- God creates an abundant and resourceful earth

Creation Mandate:

Genesis 1:25-29 – *“25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.”*

Genesis 2:15 – *“15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”*

- Man is the pinnacle of God’s creation
- Man is more important than the rest of creation
 - Ingrid Newkirk, President of PETA, “There is no rational basis for saying that human beings have special rights. A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They’re all mammals.”
 - Leviticus: Animals used as a sacrifice for man’s sin
 - Matthew 6:26 - *“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”*
 - Matthew 10:29-31 - *“29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*
 - Matthew 12:11-12 - *“11 He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”*
- Man is meant to subdue creation
 - God has created the earth and set man in it to use it, improve upon it, and make it a habitable place for his good and for God’s glory.
 - This is meant to cause worship and joy, not guilt
- Man is meant to care for God’s creation
 - Exodus 20:10 - *“but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.”*

- Deuteronomy 22:4 – “*You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them. You shall help him to lift them up again.*”
- Deuteronomy 25:4 – “*You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.*”
- Proverbs 12:10 – “*Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast.*”

Fall:

Genesis 3:17-19 – “*And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*”

- Creation is now “naturally” broken
- Not only is creation itself broken, but man’s heart is now sinful
- Good creation isn’t destroyed. It’s mixed with “thorns and thistles”
 - All the “goodness” isn’t removed
 - 1 Timothy 4:4, “*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving*”
- Fall doesn’t remove the creation mandate or the goodness of God’s creation
 - Man continues to subdue the earth after the Fall
 - Genesis 9:1-3 – “*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.”*”
 - Psalm 8:4-8 “*what is man that you are mindful of him...6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”*
 - New Testament shows that eating meat is morally right:
 - Romans 14:2-3 – “*One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.”*
 - 1 Corinthians 8:7-9 – “*7 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.”*
 - Mark 7:18-19 – “*Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)*”

Redemption:

Rom 8:19-22 – “*19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”*

Isaiah 11:6-9 – “*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. 9 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*”

Isaiah 51:3 – “*For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.*”

Acts 3:19-21 – “*19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.*”

- Creation is included in God’s plan of redemption
- God is in total control of creation
- We should see the renewal of creation as something good
- How the story ends: Renewed Creation

Where Environmentalist Worldview Clashes with Biblical Worldview

Untouched Nature:

Environmentalist view “untouched nature” as the ideal and the highest good

- “I would argue that Christians should not be seeking a romantic ideal where the earth is untouched by human hands. Rather, we want to think carefully about how we can use our hands to make the earth more hospitable for more people, so that we might enjoy the beauty, grandeur, creativity, and productivity of our Father’s world.” -Kevin DeYoung, Pastor, Author

Worship of the world: Blurring the lines of Creator/creation

- Environmentalist Mary Nicholas, “Earth Day was not just about pollution of our air and water. It was also recognizing that we share a common interest in nature. We don’t own nature. She owns us. And we need to give her respect.”
- Pope Francis, “We have failed to care for the earth, our garden-home; we have failed to care for our brothers and sisters. We have sinned against the earth, against our neighbors, and ultimately against the Creator, the benevolent Father who provides for everyone, and desires us to live in communion and flourish together. And how does the earth react?...The earth does not forgive: if we have despoiled the earth, its response will be very ugly...When we see these natural tragedies that are the earth’s response to our mistreatment, I think: “If I ask the Lord now what he thinks about it, I do not believe he is saying it is a very good thing”...The prophetic gift of contemplation is something that we can learn especially from indigenous peoples. They teach us that we cannot heal the earth unless we love and respect it. They have the wisdom of “living well,” not in the sense of having a good time, no, but of living in harmony with the earth.”
- Christian care for the environment should be motivated by love of Creator and love of neighbor, not love of mother earth

Humans are destroying “pure nature” (man is the problem with the world)

- Environmentalist Paul Watson called humans the “AIDS of the earth”

- Thanos was an environmentalist!
- What we think of as “natural” isn’t always good or godly, because “natural” creation is broken. It is good and right for us to develop and improve on fallen nature
- God wants us to see ourselves as stewards of the earth, called to subdue, enjoy, protect, use, and develop His fallen creation.

Flipping Creation Mandate:

Man is made for the earth rather than the earth for man

- Environmentalist Paul Watson suggested that humans should reduce their population to one billion, live in communities of 20,000, with wilderness separating each community.
- Gretah Thornburg, Time Magazine’s Person of the Year said about carbon emissions, “We must forget about net zero, we need “real zero” starting now.”
- Many environmentalist ideas come at a massive human cost
 - Bjorn Lomborg, a respected Danish environmentalist and professor of statistics, held a series of meetings called the “Copenhagen Consensus” where they assumed man-made global warming was happening and looked for the best human response.
 - They concluded that “for some of the world’s poorest countries which would be adversely affected by climate change, problems like HIV/AIDS, hunger, and malaria are more pressing and can be addressed with more efficacy.”
 - They further concluded that using funds to fight climate change would be the worst use of funds.
- God says, “Fill the earth and subdue it.” Environmentalists say, “Don’t fill the earth and don’t subdue it”
- Caring for the earth doesn’t mean you serve it. It means being a good steward so that God is glorified

Animals over man: Killing or using animals for food, clothing, or scientific advancement is seen as immoral

- They object to killing of mosquitoes that spread disease and in places like Africa that kills millions
- In 2008 San Joaquin Valley had their water diverted to the Pacific Ocean to save a fish called the Delta Smelt. As a result a large amount of crops died, unemployment rates hit 40% in the region, there were massive food shortages, and the poor were affected most of all.
- It is good and pleasing to God for us to subdue the earth
 - Animals are for food
 - Use animals for clothes
 - Genesis 3:21 – “*the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*”
 - Develop a spray that kills malaria-carrying mosquitoes
 - “*you are of more value than many sparrows (Delta Smelt).*” Matthew 10:31

Emotional and Fearful Approach:

Environmentalists typically appeal to emotion to win people to their position.

- Sarah McLachlan’s puppy commercials. Appeal to emotion: “Look at how cruel people treat animals, now adopt a puppy!”
- Picture of a chopped down forest. “Look at the destruction man causes!”
- Polar bear jumping off ice
- When discussing climate change: “Don’t you care about humanity?!”
- Gretah Thornburg speech at UN Climate Action Summit: “This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in

the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!...You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this.”

- If you push back, you’re accused of being uneducated, climate denialism, or a selfish hater of humanity.
 - Roger Pielke, Jr., a lifelong progressive Democrat and environmental scientist. Released a report that natural disasters aren’t getting worse. His whole reputation was threatened as a result.
- Emotions aren’t bad in and of themselves but when they are used for manipulation away from truth, they are harmful.
- Christians never “go with their gut.” We are led by the Scriptures.

Environmentalists typically use fear to win people to their position.

- There’s this idea that the world is incredibly fragile and weak
 - Environmentalist Norman Myers wrote *The Sinking Ark*, estimated that we lose 40,000 every year with no data. Al Gore repeated this claim, which made it popular.
 - Professor Paul Ehrlich, an influential Stanford biologist and environmentalist, claimed in 1981 that half of the world’s species will go extinct by the year 2000 and that by the year 2010 all of the world species would be on.
 - Over the last 500 years the documented rate of animal extinction is 1 per year
 - There is a continual claim that the world is quickly running out of trees.
 - Bjorn Lomborg, reports from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations show that global forest cover has increased from 30.04% of the global land area in 1950 to 30.89% in 1994
- Perceived urgency of the topic: “If we don’t do something right now...!”
 - Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) – “The world is going to end in 12 years if we don’t address climate change...this is our World War II.”
 - Greta Thunberg – “I want you to panic like your house was on fire!”
 - In 2000 Al Gore claimed in *An Inconvenient Truth* that the ice from the arctic ocean would be gone by the summer of 2014, putting much of Florida, San Francisco, and NYC under water
 - The media reports are typically on specific, local incidents where something has gone wrong (oil spill, crop failure and famine in some country, cutting down of trees and loss of forest area in specific country, etc.), rather than data showing long-term trends of the earth as a whole
 - Fear is great click bate
 - Environmentalist, Professor of Environmental Biology and Global Change at Stanford University, Stephen Schneider, “We have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have (about the actual danger of climate change)...Each of us has to decided what the right balance is between being effective and being honest.”
- Fear is overblown:
 - IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, used by UN) – “In climate research and modelling, we should recognize that we are dealing with a coupled non-linear chaotic system, and therefore that the long-term prediction of future climate states is not possible.”
 - Michael Shellenberger is a well-known environmentalist, named a *Time* magazine Heroes of the Environment (2008), asked by Congress to provide expert testimony on effective energy use, serves as an expert reviewer of the IPCC assessment report, just published in June called *Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All*.
 - “On behalf of environmentalists everywhere, I would like to formally apologize for the climate scare we created over the last 30 years. Climate change is happening. It’s just not the end of the world. It’s not even our most serious environmental problem...I feel an obligation to apologize for how badly we environmentalists have misled the public...I

know that this will sound like “climate denialism” to many people. But that just shows the power of climate alarmism...until last year, I mostly avoided speaking out against the climate scare. Partly that’s because I was embarrassed. For years, I referred to climate change as an “existential” threat to human civilization, and called it a “crisis.” But then, last year, things spiraled out of control. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said, “The world is going to end in 12 years if we don’t address climate change.” The world’s most influential green journalist, Bill McKibben, called climate change the “greatest challenge humans have ever faced” and said it would “wipe out civilizations.”...I thus decided I had to speak out...And so my formal apology for our fear-mongering comes in the form of my new book (based on two decades of research and three decades of environmental activism), *Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All.*”

- Christians are never to be a people of fear, but a people of hope.
 - Genesis 9:11 – *“I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”*
 - Psalm 104:5-9 – *“5 He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 7 At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight. 8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. 9 You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.”*
 - Job 38:8-11 – *“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, 9 when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, 11 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?”*
- God created a resilient earth
 - Genesis 8:21-22 – *“21 And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”*
- God did not design an earth that we would destroy by obeying His command to fill and subdue it.