



A Satisfied Creation

The call of creation resonates throughout Scripture for any with ears to hear and eyes to see. From the beginning of Genesis, the first words used to describe God are those of creation. Before we know anything else about God, we know God as Creator. From this knowledge of God, we come to know ourselves as created beings. The Bible portrays humanity as the pinnacle of an entire created order to which we are inextricably linked. And yet, it is all too easy to read Scripture with an eye solely for human affairs. It is when we read the Bible with a full appreciation for the significance it assigns to creation that we discover a richer, more complete account of the creative, sustaining and redemptive work of God in the world.

A great way to begin exploring what the Bible has to say about creation and our responsibility to it is by reading through the Psalms. Notice the number of times God's role as Creator is evoked. How does the Psalmist speak of nature and humanity's relationship to it? Below is a Bible study based on Psalm 104 that can be used to begin a discussion on creation care in your church.

Text: Psalm 104

Highlighted Verses: *You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth (vv. 10-14).*

Main Themes:

Emphasize God's role as Creator

Creation is ordered and every creature's needs are provided for

Humans are one part of an entire created order
Creation should be protected and preserved

Verses 1-9: The Psalm begins with a recitation of the original creative acts of God – stretching out the heavens, forming the earth, setting the boundaries for the sea (vv. 2-9). God’s sovereignty above all others is affirmed through the description of the great forces of nature, including the wind and water, that are subject to God.

Questions for discussion:

- What is the possible significance of the Psalmist beginning by recounting God’s original act of creation?
- What attributes of God stand out to you from these first 9 verses?
- What are the implications of God’s role as Creator?
- Is there any part of the earth that is not under God’s sovereignty?

Verses 10-23: These verses describe an ordered world in which the needs of creatures are provided for and patterns of life are set out. The word for ‘use’ in v14 can also mean cultivate. Humans are meant to care for and tend to the land. It is important to note that they play one of many roles in the order of creation. A majority of the verses in this Psalm are not focused on humanity, but other animals and plants. Throughout these verses it is God who provides for God’s creation in abundance so that all the earth is satisfied.

Questions for discussion:

- According to the Psalm, is creation a onetime event for God or something God continues to participate in?
- What does it mean for us that God continues to be involved in creation?
- How does the Psalmist depict humans and their role?
- Does this Psalm suggest any kind of dependency between living beings?
- Does this Psalm suggest that God views any part of creation as unimportant or without value?
- Does this depiction of creation suggest there are boundaries to creation? Are these boundaries appropriate? Inappropriate? Beneficial? Harmful?

Verses 24-35: In the following verses the Psalmist praises God for the wonder of creation. God is shown to be the one who sustains the world by providing all God's creatures with food and good things, each in their own season. Verse 35 is not only a condemnation of sinners, but expresses the idea that the presence of sin could prevent God from continuing to bestow the good gifts of creation (see Jer. 5:23-26).

Questions for discussion:

- How often do we view the earth as a glorious gift from God?
- Does this gift come with any responsibilities?
- Who ultimately has ownership over the earth, us or God?
- What does the concept of stewardship imply?
- What does the exclamation "May the glory of the Lord endure forever" (v31) mean? Is creation the glory of the Lord?
- Do our current policies and practices show proper appreciation to God for creation? Is failure to care for creation a sin?