



Earth Day – Why Should Christians Get Involved?

By Emily Ross

Over the years stewardship has been something that has had a general association with finances, income, and money. Recently, however, this term has also become affiliated with creation, the earth, and the environment. As Stewardship of the Earth has become a new "hot topic" issue in society, the Commission on Stewardship of the Evangelical Covenant Church has begun to look at Christians' roles in being not only good stewards of our time, talents, and treasures, but also good stewards of God's earth. Next week, a blog will be created to help raise awareness around the issue of Biblical stewardship of the earth. *The Stewardship Commission is just beginning this journey, and we invite you to join us in this endeavor!* We hope that you will find this and the other resources referenced here both helpful and insightful as your congregations - as a whole and as individuals - begin to look at the role of Christians in holistic stewardship.

As many of you know, today is April 22nd, a day which has become known as Earth Day. The Stewardship Commission has chosen today as the day to "launch" this new endeavor, and in so doing, I feel that a brief history of Earth Day might be insightful. Earth Day originated in 1963 and has gained increasing attention over the years, particularly in the last two to three decades. As people around the world have an increased concern for the earth and its care, Earth Day has gained more recognition. April 22nd serves as a reminder for the desire of a healthy and sustainable environment for this generation and for generations to come.

Today there are commercials on television informing people about ways to "go green," ways to help save the planet, and practical everyday steps that each person can do to help the earth. Recycling programs are gaining more attention. The Earth Hour project raised awareness in record numbers earlier this month. And a new tool to discover your carbon footprint has increased further awareness of carbon emissions. I believe that most people would agree that care of the earth is something that needs to be addressed, but why should Christians make this their priority? What does helping the earth have to do with God and our roles as Christians? As stated in the 2007 Resolution on Creation Care, "there has never been a moment in human history in which we have not been intrinsically connected to and reliant upon all of God's creation."¹ We'll further look at this understanding of creation and others throughout the weeks and months to come.

The Stewardship Commission is hoping that this blog will provide the space to discuss these and other questions about God, creation (human and non-human), and the environment. This is not a political agenda. This is not something that has been created to stir up controversy. Rather, we desire to go to Scripture and learn what the role of humanity is with regard to the creation, health, and sustainability of God's earth. This first post is simply to inform you of what the Stewardship Commission is doing with regards to Stewardship of the Earth.

¹ <http://www.covchurch.org/resolutions/2007-creation-care>

So, check out the Stewardship website (www.covchurch.org/stewardship), especially the Stewardship of the Earth section, and in the weeks to come we'll look at Scripture passages, quotes, books, articles, etc... - all with a God-centered focus. Over the first few weeks, I may make references to the book *For the Beauty of the Earth*, which is a resource that provides a number of helpful insights for Christians with regard to a theology of creation care. It is my hope that you will take the time to read this book and begin to apply Steven Bouma-Prediger's experiences and knowledge to your own life as well. *We invite you to engage in this conversation with us as we begin to look at the Christian's role in holistic stewardship!*

Genesis 2:15 says, "The LORD God took the man [Adam] and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (TNIV). In *For the Beauty of the Earth*, Bouma-Prediger points out that "We care for only what we love. We love only what we know. We truly know only what we experience" (37). So, if Christians are going to care for the earth, they must love it, but to love it, they must learn about it, and to learn about it, they must experience it on a personal level. I would add that humanity experiences creation through the Creator. So, if we experience God, we must then live into our call as part of creation and "we must work it [the earth] and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15 – TNIV). *It is not just a matter of the hands, it is a matter of the head and the heart as well – it is holistic stewardship.*

My challenge for this week is to get out there and care for the earth! Meditate on Genesis 2 and put your reading into practice. Go for a walk and enjoy the beauty of creation. Take a bag with you and pick up some trash along the way. Start to be more intentional about recycling. Ride your bike or walk when possible to decrease your carbon footprint. *Do whatever it is that draws you closer to God and allows you to care for creation!* May you go into this week and be the hands and feet of Jesus through caring for creation.