

Caring for God's World

LESSON

1

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God wants us to care for his world.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ play games to celebrate creation and simulate pollution;
- ✓ discover God's instructions about caring for the earth;
- ✓ evaluate ways people contribute to pollution; and
- ✓ plan ways to keep the earth clean and safe for living.

YOU'LL NEED

- 1 blindfold for every pair of kids *or* items collected from nature placed in individual lunch bags
- Bible
- newspapers
- paper grocery bags
- newsprint
- markers
- photocopies of the "God's Wonderful World" handout (p. 16)
- crayons

BIBLE BASIS

Genesis 2:15-20

"The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it." This verse gives a solid foundation for both a work ethic and ecology, all in one sentence. God didn't leave Adam to wander aimlessly through the garden—he gave

Adam a purpose for living. Work and responsibility for our living space are not the result of human sin, but part of God's original plan for people.

God made humans the rulers and caretakers of his newly created world. It's a sacred trust that all Christians share, not only for practical reasons, but theological ones, as well.

Psalm 104:24

The great variety displayed in the natural world is a fitting tribute to the creativity of the Creator! After spending a day in nature, even the most determined agnostic must wonder how all this beauty could possibly have happened by chance.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

This is one of many lessons in which the teachers might very well learn something from the children. Kids live in a world where the environment is often at center stage in the media. They're bombarded with messages about how to care for the earth.

It's a good thing kids are learning to "think green," because they're the ones who will live with or repair the damage done by preceding generations. Christian kids have even more reason to get involved in environmental matters. It's their God-given task!

Being excited about taking care of the environment and living out that concern on a day-to-day basis are two different matters. When you're out and about, it's sometimes easier to pitch an aluminum can in the trash than to find a recycle bin. Real conservation means remembering to turn off lights, hiking or biking instead of hitching a car ride, and cooling off in the shade instead of in the air conditioning. Kids are often tempted to do things the easy way instead of the "green" way. They need lots of encouragement and affirmation to develop and stick to an environment-conscious lifestyle that will keep God's earth green for future generations.

The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

Find a Tree (outdoor activity)

Tell the class you're going to begin this lesson with a very different kind of nature study. Have kids form pairs—preferably with an older and younger student in each pair. Take the group outside and walk to a place where there are several trees.

Gather everyone in the middle of the trees and say: **One partner will put on a blindfold. The other partner will lead the blindfolded partner to a tree, any tree. When you get to your tree, feel it very carefully with your hands. Try to learn everything about that tree you can without looking at it. Then your partner will lead you back to the center, spin you around three times, and take off the blindfold.**

After everyone has felt a tree, been spun around, and sat down, remove the blindfolds and find out how many kids can find the trees they touched. If it's a nice day, sit down on the grass to discuss the experience.

Ask:

◆ **What was it like to examine a tree with your hands?** (I felt silly; it felt kind of neat.)

◆ **How did you feel when you did or didn't recognize the tree you felt?** (I was glad; surprised I could recognize it.)

◆ **What do you like about trees?** (They give us shade and fruit; they're pretty to look at.)

Say: **Trees are a wonderful part of God's creation. They're part of God's gift to us, and we need to take care of them. God put trees in the garden where he made the very first man and woman. Today, we're going to talk about what happened in that garden and about the important job God gave to that first man.**

Creation Mysteries (indoor activity)

Collect several items from nature that have different textures and place them in separate brown lunch bags. You might include a smooth leaf, flower petals, a thistle, a pine branch, garden soil, a bird feather, and a rock. Have kids take turns feeling what's in each bag without looking. After everyone has had a chance to touch the mystery items, let the younger kids tell you what they think each bag contains. Then spread out the mystery items on a table.

Ask:

◆ **Which was your favorite thing to touch?** Answers will differ.

Teacher Tip

If it's not possible to take your kids outside or if your area doesn't have many trees, use the Creation Mysteries Attention Grabber below.



◆ **What can you learn about things without using your eyes?** (What they feel like; how they're put together.)

Say: **Did you know God gave us the very important job of taking care of all these things? It happened way back when God created the world. God wants us to care for his world.**

★ **Let's find out about that by taking a trip back to the beginning of the earth.**

BIBLE STUDY

The World God Made (Genesis 2:15-20)

Say: **Today we're going to make a copy of the Garden of Eden—where God put the first people he ever made.**

Have kids volunteer for the following parts by raising their hands. Explain that kids will stay in their seats now and then play their roles when you read through the Bible passage.

◆ **First of all, our garden has a man named Adam. Who wants to be Adam?**

◆ **The Bible talks about a river running through the garden. We need two or three people to stretch out on the ground to make the river.**

◆ **Now we need a couple of trees. Who wants to be a tree?**

◆ **Now we need two more trees—the tree of life and the tree of having knowledge of good and evil.**

◆ **Last of all, we need people to be all kinds of birds and animals.**

Be sure all kids who haven't been chosen for another part become birds and animals.

Say: **Great! Now we're all ready. Listen for your part and be ready to take your place in the garden as I read the story from the Bible.**

Read Genesis 2:15-20 aloud, pausing to cue kids to perform their assigned parts. Some students may be excited about this kind of Bible study and want to do it again. That's fine—do it again if you have time.

Ask:

◆ **What do you think the Garden of Eden was like?** (It was full of beautiful trees and flowers and friendly animals.)

Say: **I think Adam enjoyed living in the garden, taking care of it, and watching over all the animals. But soon Adam and Eve sinned, and God made them leave the garden. Then more and more people were born, and they began to spread all over the earth. Now we have the whole world to take care of. ★ God wants us to care of his world.**

Ask:

◆ **What do you think of how we're taking care of God's world?** Kids' responses will vary.

Teacher Tip

Choose a kid-friendly Bible such as Group's Hands-On Bible® (group.com) for use with the lessons.

You may want to have an older student read the Bible passage so you can be free to coach the children on when to take their places and how to play their parts.



LIFE APPLICATION

Clean Sweep

Say: Let's see what kind of job we're doing taking care of the part of God's world we live in. We're going to go outside for a "look and listen" walk. I want you to be totally silent—no talking at all. Listen for all the sounds you can hear, and look around for any garbage or pollution you can see. Don't talk until we're sitting here in our places again.

Take the kids for a two-minute walk. Then bring them back inside and discuss what they saw and heard. Ask about the natural sounds and the human-made sounds. Talk about natural beauty and human-made pollution. If you want, have kids go back outside and pick up any trash they saw on the walk.

Ask:

◆ **How do you think God feels when he sees how people have messed up the beautiful world he created?** (Sad; angry; disgusted.)

Say: Let's play a game called Clean Sweep and see if that will help us understand.

Have kids count off by threes. Have "Ones" and "Twos" form a big circle together. Give each child in the circle a sheet of newspaper. Give "Threes" each a paper grocery bag, and have them get on their hands and knees in the middle of the circle.

Say: When I say "go," Ones and Twos will start tearing their newspapers into little pieces and throwing the pieces into the circle. The Threes will try to keep the circle clean by picking up all the paper shreds and putting them in their bags. I'll call time after one minute, and then we'll see if the Threes were able to keep the circle clean. Ready? Go!

After the minute is up, have everyone help the Threes gather the paper shreds. Then ask:

◆ **What was this game like for you?** (It was fun, but I felt bad about making the other group work so hard.)

◆ **How is this game like what's happening in the real world?** (A lot of people are polluting and only a few are trying to clean it up; not everyone is taking care of the earth.)

◆ **How does being a Christian make a difference in the way we feel about keeping the earth clean?** (We know God made the earth so we should want to work hard to please God.)

Say: ★ **God wants us to care for his world. Tell me about the things you do to help care for the earth.** List kids' responses on newsprint.

Ask:

◆ **What else can we do to help care for the earth?** If kids haven't already mentioned these things, bring them up: We

Teacher Tip

If you have extra time, have kids return to their three groups and create posters or banners urging people to take good care of the wonderful world God has given us.



can recycle, walk or ride a bike instead of asking for a ride in a car, correctly take care of our trash, use water and other resources carefully.

Record these ideas on newsprint, as well.

COMMITMENT

Our Favorite Things

Give kids each a photocopy of the “God’s Wonderful World” handout and a crayon. Point out the Bible verse at the bottom and ask a volunteer to read it aloud.

Say: You can see this handout is divided in half. On the left side of the page, draw your favorite thing from creation—it can be a flower, a tree, an animal or even a mountain. On the right side, draw or write about one thing you’ll do this week to help take care of God’s wonderful world.

Allow a few minutes for drawing and writing, and then ask volunteers to share what they drew or wrote about. Encourage kids to share their plans with their parents.

CLOSING

For All the Earth

Gather kids in a circle and lead them in sentence prayers. Have volunteers finish the sentence, “Thank you, God, for creating...” Close the prayer time by asking God’s help in taking good care of his wonderful world.



GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD

Draw your favorite thing in all of God's creation.

Draw or write about one thing you'll do this week
to help care for God's world.

"O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creations" Psalm 104:24.

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