

Creation Week | Don't Waste Your Year!

I. How Christians should Approach the Creation

- The Creation is Good.
 - There are two things in particular that drive many Christians away from creation.
 - Fear — Modern technological advances have reared a generation of young people completely detached from the living creation.
 - Ignorance — Another consequence of our post-industrial age is that most of us don't need to know how anything is made in order to enjoy it. Sometimes the ignorance is understandable in that the person has never had to think about it, but sometimes the ignorance is intentional, and that's sad.
- God Wants His People to Steward the Earth.
 - Part of God's stated purpose in creating man was that we should "*rule over all the earth.*" The Hebrew word translated "rule" means literally to exercise *dominion* over and *subdue*. It's a strong word with a precise definition.
 - Man was created — in part — to possess this creation. This mindset, however — removed from the entire canon of Scripture — may produce an abusive ecology of stripping and wasting. But the Christian knows he must not subtract a single verse and interpret it apart from the rest of God's revealed truth.

II. The Nature of Sanctified Sustainability

- Sanctified Sustainability is **Intelligent Stewardship**.
 - Leviticus has much to say about rotating crops, letting the land rest, and allowing plants to grow in healthy, profitable ways. Nothing should be attempted ignorantly. We see in Scripture that wisdom learns, understands, applies that learning to life, and then learns some more. We must be knowledgeable about this earth and how God desires it to work.
- Sanctified Sustainability is **Efficient Stewardship**.
 - It's true that I Corinthians 14 is talking primarily about the use of spiritual gifts in the church, but it's also clear from the entirety of Scripture that God is a God of *order*. This cannot apply only to speaking in tongues and prophesying. He created the world in an orderly fashion, He desires worship and service to be orderly, and He commands us to redeem the time and count the costs. When we disrupt the normal created order to mass-produce unhealthy products for the grasping fingers of consumer-oriented mini-kingdoms, we dismiss the way God intended His creation to function.
- Sanctified Sustainability is **Gentle Stewardship**.
 - Our concept of fairness is generally not biblically informed, and yet the command to be gentle applies not only to people, but it also has application to our animals. In I Timothy, Paul acknowledges the practice of not muzzling an ox as it threshes because even the animal is deserving of remuneration for its work. He was specifically quoting Deuteronomy 25:4.
 - Now, please understand, we do have the right to kill animals in order to put food on our plates and provide for our necessities, but the Lord is not glorified by inhumane treatment of animals. There is no reason to cause an animal to suffer by spending its entire life lying in its own feces just so everyone can have bacon on Saturday.

III. How the Creation Mandate Can Enrich Creation Week and the Rest of the Year

- **God is to be worshipped, not nature.**
 - DO NOT MAKE AN IDOL OF CREATION.
 - It doesn't matter how worthy the cause, if you devote more time and energy and money to it than you do to Christ, you are worshipping the creation instead of the Creator.
 - Romans has some very uncomfortable things to say about people in that position. Our ecology — along with everything else — must be motivated by our *love for God*.
- **Waste is to be avoided at all costs.**
 - *We squander the basic resources God generously bestows on us to accomplish His will.*
 - God deserves our worship every moment of every day. How we use and steward our possessions is either going to glorify God or it will glorify ourselves.
 - *We waste the time and talents given to us to praise our Savior and point all eyes to Him.*
 - Have you ever noticed that in the Bible it doesn't matter whether they are a king, evangelist, beggar, or prophet — it only mattered what they did for God.
 - A vocation means nothing outside of its usefulness in accomplishing God's plan.
 - *We fritter away the daily grace and Spirit empowerment the Lord provides.*
 - God has promised moment by moment escapes from temptation. Every morning a daily helping of mercy waits for us beside our beds. The Holy Spirit is constantly interceding for us with petitions we don't even know we need. Jesus is our perpetual advocate before the Father.
 - God hates it when we waste the empowerment He provides. The only way we will be able to worship God every day this year is by His grace and power. We desperately, eternally need Him in order to please Him.
 - *We waste God's absolute truth in the market place of ideas, hastily trading it for pathetic lies.*
 - The Bible contains every command, principle, proverb, and answer to life. But instead of washing our minds with Its truth, ever-minding Its precepts, and utilizing Its life-changing power . . . we log on to Twitter to be told how to live.
 - *We throw away God's gift of salvation by rejecting it or hiding it under a bushel.*
 - This is the greatest waste of all. The Gospel stands as the pinnacle of all-encompassing truth. Yet, we hide it under the commonplace bushels of our cubical walls, backpacks, and status updates. Even worse are those who take the shed blood of Christ and pour it onto the ground as an act of rebellion toward God and hatred of His sacrificial act of love. The greatest waste in the universe is the rejection of salvation.
 - But for those of us who are professing followers of Christ, when we don't engage in evangelism and discipleship, we're wasting the Gospel.
- **Resources must be used to the best of their ability.**
 - We must learn to weigh carefully what we're going to do with our money.
 - Yes, how we spend our money is also an act of worship. Are we pleasing the Lord with the stewardship of our funds, or are we sacrificing to the god of self?
- **Abuse must stop; conservation must start.**
 - The Christian must never commit to a life-choice without knowing the spiritual implications. The Bible repeatedly demands that we be wise, discerning, thoughtful, and careful.
 - So many professing Christians are okay with homosexuality and abortion because they haven't really studied what God's Word says; they parrot the talking-head they like the most.

IV. Practical Application

- **Know God's Word.**
 - If you don't know God's thoughts on our stewardship responsibilities for this planet, how can you keep them? If you don't know how God expects you to steward your spiritual resources, you'll never experience the joys He has prepared for you.
- **Understand the truth about your food.**
 - There's a two-fold application to this point.
 - First, can you "eat or drink . . . all to the glory of God" if you don't know your food has been abused, made unhealthy by over-ambitious genetic engineering, or created in a wasteful manner?
 - And second, consider your spiritual food. As we fill our physical bodies with physical food that will only hurt our health, we also neglect the spiritual food of Scripture study and prayer. We're physically and spiritually emaciating ourselves!
 - Glorifying God with our physical food requires doing some research, but glorifying God with our spiritual food is so much simpler. He's already told us what the healthy diet is . . . now we just need to consume it.
 - Pray without ceasing, fall in love with spending time with God in the Scriptures. You won't regret it!
- **Don't waste.**
 - There is *no* excuse for any of us to add to landfills because we feel we "need" a new couch when our old one is perfectly fine. Sell it. Give it away. But consider whether or not that's the best thing God wants you spending your money on.
 - Also, imagine the sadness that will overwhelm our hearts when we stand before our Lord and find that though we cared very much for sharing the gospel and providing for the needy, we greatly displeased our God by not glorifying Him in our eating and drinking and day to day living.
 - But even more important than all of that, don't waste God's gift of salvation. Don't waste the time He's given you. Don't waste the spiritual gifts with which He's blessed you. Don't waste the grace and power He daily offers for you to worship Him . . . instead of yourself.
 - Waste is an act of self-worship; redeeming and stewarding in a Christ-honoring way is an act of God-worship.
 - And that's what all Christians should want for this new celebratory year.