

# CARING FOR THE CREATION

A series of three Bible Studies



To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens,  
the earth and everything in it.

*Deuteronomy 10:14*

**Nola Stewart**    **May 2010**    Second edition



# CARING FOR THE CREATION

A Series of 3 Bible Studies

- Study 1 **Let Us Praise the Creator**
- Study 2 **By the Power of the Son**
- Study 3 **Regeneration of the Earth through the Holy Spirit**

## Introduction:

Warm greetings to the Reader of these Studies.  
May you and God's Creation be blessed through your study of them.

In Study 1, we affirm that "The Earth is the Lord's" and look at how we may give God the glory for the whole of His Creation.

In Study 2, we recognise our need to come closer to Jesus, in order to renew our attitudes towards God's good Creation. It is He who brings about repentance in us.

In Study 3, we seek dependence on God's Holy Spirit to enable us who are a part of the Church to right past wrongs and to allow the restoration of God's amazing world.

Three words may be used to summarise these Studies:

**AFFIRMATION**

**CONFESSION**

**REGENERATION**

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The New International Version ( NIV ) is the translation mainly used in these Bible Studies.

**Aim:** To ask our Creator and loving Heavenly Father for grace to appreciate how truly amazing His Creation is, and to know how He would have us understand our appointed role within the natural order of that Creation.

**Prayer:** A prayer based on the Aim above.

e.g. *O God, our Maker and Heavenly Father, we ask you to give us your grace, that we may appreciate the wonders of your Creation. Help us to understand how we may take on our appointed role within the natural order of your Creation, for Jesus' sake, Amen.*

**Words of a Hymn:** Choose a hymn with words of praise to God for the beauty and wonder of His Creation. (EXAMPLE: 'How Great Thou Art') The words may be read by one or more readers, or sung if there is a musical instrument or, if suitable, incorporated into the initial Prayer.

**The Setting:**

1. In preparation, give thought to the setting. A picture of a scene, e.g. Sunset, a CD with sounds of birdsong, some flowers or a view of a garden can help focus the thoughts of the Group on the theme of the Bible Study.
2. Bring some objects, which can be experienced by each of the 5 senses, e.g. A painting (*Sight*), Recorded music (*Hearing*), Sugar (*Taste*), some tree bark (*Touch*), Orange peel (*Smell*) and allow the group to experience these. Consider the purpose of this Activity - our senses inform us of the world God created and are means through which we may appreciate, in some small way, His creative power, that our hearts may be moved to praise Him.
3. State the purpose of the Setting and link this activity with the Aim.

**Psalms of Praise:** Three readers take turns to read out the following from the book of Psalms: Ps 24 : 1, 2 Ps 50 : 1, 10, 11 Ps 8: 1, 3, 4.

**Pre-Reading:** It is helpful if those in the Group can have a few minutes to read through the Bible Passage which is central to this Study, **Genesis chapter 1**.

**Questions** on Genesis Ch. 1 (*See Attachments 1 for Worksheet and 2 for Answers*)

1. What word is used to describe God's creation in verses 4, 10, 12, 18 and 25?
2. How does Genesis 1:31 describe all that God has made?
3. The Hebrew use of the word 'day' is the same as in English, in that 'day' can refer to a 24 hour day or to a period of time (e.g. *'In your grandfather's day, they used to ...*). Using Genesis Chapter 1, sort the following into 'Days' from Day 1 to Day 6:

*Livestock. Wild animals, Light, Marine life, Humans, Birds, Sun, Moon, Stars, Sky. Vegetation. Creeping things (that move over the ground)*

4. The God of the Bible is One who relates to the creatures He has made. What blessing did God give to the living things created on Day 4? - See Genesis 1 : 22. Place a tick in the brackets to show which of the following are correct answers:

- a. Be fruitful ( )    b. Multiply / Increase in number ( )    c. Fill (appropriate habitat) ( )  
d. Subdue the Earth ( )    e. Rule over the other living creatures ( )

5. In Genesis 1 : 22. what might be meant by 'Fill the ... (waters / earth)'? *Choose one of the following:*

- a. occupy every available space  
b. spread out to occupy a suitable living space  
c. aim to keep numbers increasing.

6. The last of the creatures God made was Man (humans), on which Day?

7. What blessing did God give to humans in Genesis 1 : 28? *Place a tick in the brackets to show correct answer(s)*

- a. Be fruitful ( )    b. Multiply / Increase in number ( )    c. Fill the Earth ( )  
d. Subdue the Earth ( )    e. Rule / have dominion over the other creatures ( )

8. 'Dominion' (rule) is a translation of a Hebrew word RADA, derived from a term meaning 'higher up on the root of a plant' \*. Living things are often seen as related to each other in a way described as a 'Tree of Life'. (See NOTE on 'Tree of Life' at the end of the Study.) Draw a rough sketch of a tree (*Paper, pens needed*). Include the roots. Put an **X** at a point on your tree, which is 'higher up on the root'. The Hebrew word for this point on a plant, RADA, is the word we translate as 'have dominion / rule over'. Rada is the point at which the strength of the plant as a whole is centred.

\* [www.servgodsavetheplanet.org](http://www.servgodsavetheplanet.org) <<http://www.servgodsavetheplanet.org>> 'Serve God, save the Planet', page 35 by Matthew Sleeth MD

We know a tree can lose part of its structure and survive. It may even sprout up again from the root, if cut down - but if the stump is ground out, what happens?

If Humans are to be as 'rada' in the Tree of Life, what does that say about our role in relation to other forms of life on Earth? (*Choose one answer and circle the Letter.*)

- a) Our role is insignificant to God: like a leaf that drops, we would hardly be missed.  
b) Like a fallen branch, humanity can be discarded from the Tree of Life as God would quickly replace us.  
c) God has placed us in a position in relation to the other forms of life on Earth where we are to have an essential role in their survival and well-being.

9. Look at Psalm 24 : 1, Psalm 50 : 10. Who does the Bible say owns all of Creation?
10. Read John 1 : 1 - 3, 14. Who was present at the Creation and active in it?
11. Look at Psalm 104, 10 - 12, 27. Does God care for creatures other than Humans?
12. Read Genesis 1 : 28.
  - (a) If someone says, 'Have a nice day,' is this a command or a blessing?
  - (b) What is the difference between a command and a blessing?
  - (c) Are the words, 'Be fruitful and multiply (verses 22 and 28) a command or a blessing?

In Genesis chapter 1 we have read that God made provision for plants to reproduce through seed (verse 11) and gave animals (verse 22) and mankind (verse 28) a blessing, 'Be fruitful and multiply.' Later in Genesis we find these words again in the story about Noah where, after the Flood, this blessing is given to Noah, his wife, their 3 sons and their wives (8 people in all). Read Genesis 9 : 1, 7 – 10.

**Question (d):** What is similar about these two stories of the Creation and the Flood?  
(Choose one answer)

- (i) 'Be fruitful and multiply' was spoken in the context of near zero populations
- (ii) Only people, not animals, were blessed
- (iii) In both stories, people were commanded to multiply indefinitely.

Since 1986, the rate at which the Earth's population has been using renewable resources such as forests and fish has exceeded their rate of replenishment. This is signified by 'Earth Overshoot Day', the date by which the population has used up the entire annual supply of renewable resources. Earth Overshoot Day is now in September, so we are now 'living off capital, not just interest'.

**Discussion Time:** Choose one or two Questions of interest to your Group. Make sure to leave sufficient time at the end of the Discussion to finish off with a Prayer.

1. If God commanded other creatures as well as Humans to multiply and fill the Earth, should humans have precedence over other species when it comes to resources and living space?
2. Christians are often criticised for interpreting 'dominion' as the right to take over the Earth as though other species didn't matter. Do you think this criticism is justified?
3. Have Christian groups and churches been amongst those who have encouraged growth in their own numbers through procreation (not just through evangelism)? If Christians follow this path, what effect might it have on other creatures?

4. A bus is 'full' when the number of passengers it is carrying has reached the legal limit, and 'over full' if that number has been exceeded. How should Christians interpret the words, 'Fill the Earth'?

5. The main reasons for human population increase in the last 200 years have been better medical care, improved nutrition and improved technology, (e.g. refrigeration) - all great blessings. What responsibility might we have to counter-balance our improved survival rate?

6. Is there any *new knowledge* we may apply from this Bible Study? *Note: New knowledge cannot be applied retrospectively to change the past and should not be used to bring about a feeling of guilt in ourselves or others.*

**Concluding Prayer:** In this Prayer, try to gather together some of the points which have arisen during the Bible Study, which are an **AFFIRMATION** of God's wonder and power as revealed in His Creation, and which *affirm* acceptance of our role under God to look after His Creation, with His help.

The Group may like to join together in reading Psalm 8 to finish.

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*NOTE: 'Tree of Life':* This simple image of a tree is being used here to illustrate the inter-relatedness of all forms of life on land and in the sea and the dependence of one species on another in an ecological sense. It is not meant to refer to the text in Genesis 2 : 9 and Genesis 3 : 19, with their references to the 'Tree of Life'.

In our simple image, Man's position, 'higher up on the root' (Hebrew RADA), is one of maximum strength and shows God's intention that humans' essential role in relation to other living things is one of responsible care; to be the centre of strength for life on Earth\*. It has sometimes been translated as 'hold sway', since rada is the strength of the plant in windy conditions.

This role within the 'tree of life' is one which humans, on the whole, have not fulfilled any better than we have fulfilled God's other purposes, and parts of the 'tree of life' are falling away as a consequence.

\* See <http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/a-radical-new-look-at-dominion-in-genesis>

Caring for the Creation ATTACHMENT 1 for Study 1 - WORKSHEET, Genesis 1

You may use this Worksheet to answer the Questions after reading Genesis Ch. 1

1. What word is used to describe God's creation in verses 4, 10, 12, 18 and 25?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

2. How does Genesis 1:31 describe all that God has made? \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Hebrew use of the word 'day' is the same as in English, in that 'day' can refer to a 24 hour day or to a period of time (e.g. 'In your grandfather's day, they used to ...'). Using Genesis Chapter 1, sort the following into 'Days' from Day 1 to Day 6 .

Livestock, Wild animals, Light, Marine life, Humans, Birds, Sun, Moon, Stars, Sky, Vegetation, Creeping things (that move over the ground)

Day 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Day 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Day 6 \_\_\_\_\_

4. The God of the Bible is One who relates to the creatures He has made. What blessing did God give to the living things created on Day 4? - See Genesis 1 : 22. Place a tick in the brackets to show correct answer(s):

- a. Be fruitful ( ) b. Multiply / Increase in number ( ) c. Fill (...appropriate habitat) ( )  
d. Subdue the Earth ( ) e. Rule over the other living creatures ( )

5. In Genesis 1 : 22, what might be meant by 'Fill the ... (waters / earth)'? Choose one of the following:

- a. occupy every available space  
b. spread out to occupy a suitable living space  
c. aim to keep numbers increasing..

6. The last of the creatures God made was Man (humans), on which Day?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What blessing did God give to human beings in Genesis 1 : 28? Place a tick in the brackets to show correct answer(s)

- a. Be fruitful ( ) b. Multiply / Increase in number ( ) c. Fill the Earth ( )  
d. Subdue the Earth ( ) e. Have dominion over the other creatures ( )

8. 'Dominion' (rule) is a translation of a Hebrew word RADA, derived from a term meaning 'higher up on the root of a plant' \*. Living things are often seen as related to each other in a way described as a 'Tree of Life'.

In the space below, draw a rough sketch of a tree. Include the roots. Put an **X** at a point on your tree, which is 'higher up on the root'. The Hebrew word for this point on a plant, RADA, is the word we translate as 'have dominion / rule over'. Rada is the point at which the strength of the plant as a whole is centred.

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We know a tree can lose part of its structure and survive. It may even sprout up again from the root if cut down - but if the stump is ground out, what happens?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

If Humans are to be as 'rada' in the Tree of Life, what does that say about our role in relation to other forms of life on Earth? (*Choose one answer and circle the Letter.*)

- a) Our role is insignificant to God; like a leaf that drops, we would hardly be missed.
- b) Like a fallen branch, humanity can be discarded from the Tree of Life as God would quickly replace us.
- c) God has placed us in a position in relation to other forms of life on Earth where we are to have an essential role in their survival and well-being.

9. Look at Psalm 24 : 1. Psalm 50 : 10. Who does the Bible say owns all of Creation?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Look at John 1 : 1 – 3, 14 . Who was present at the Creation and active in it?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Look at Psalm 104: 10 - 12, 27. Does God care for creatures other than Humans?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Read Genesis 1 : 28.

(a) If someone says, 'Have a nice day,' is this a command or a blessing?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) What is the difference between a command and a blessing?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(c) Are the words, 'Be fruitful and multiply' (verses 22 and 28) a command or a blessing?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

In Genesis chapter 1 we have read that God made provision for plants to reproduce through seed (verse 11) and gave animals (verse 22) and mankind (verse 28) a blessing, 'Be fruitful and multiply.' Later in Genesis we find these words again in the story about Noah where, after the Flood, this blessing is given to Noah, his wife, their 3 sons and their wives (8 people in all). Read Genesis 9 : 1, 7 – 10.

Question (d): What is similar about these two stories of the Creation and the Flood?  
(Circle the correct answer)

- (i) 'Be fruitful and multiply' was spoken in the context of near zero populations
- (ii) Only people, not animals, were blessed
- (iii) In both stories, people were commanded to multiply indefinitely.

Since 1986, the rate at which the Earth's population has been using renewable resources such as forests and fish has exceeded their rate of replenishment. This is signified by 'Earth Overshoot Day', the date by which the population has used up the entire annual supply of renewable resources. Earth Overshoot Day is now in September, so we are now 'living off capital, not just interest'.

Caring for the Creation **ATTACHMENT 2** for Study 1 - **ANSWERS** to Worksheet, Genesis 1

1. Good      2. Very good

3. Day 1 *Light*    Day 2 *Sky*    Day 3 *Vegetation*    Day 4 *Sun, Moon, Stars*

Day 5 *Marine life, Birds*    Day 6 *Livestock, Wild animals, Humans, Creeping things*

NOTE: We need not in this Study become sidetracked here into a consideration of Science. While the order of Creation as in this chapter reflects fairly well the order that is revealed also by Science - even light itself being created before the Sun, which is a relatively 'young' star - the relation between Science and Genesis is beyond the scope of this Study.

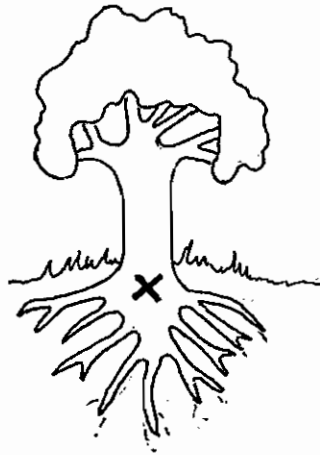
4. A tick for (a), (b) and (c)

5. (b)

6. DAY 6

7. A tick for (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e)

8.



The tree will die

(c)

9. God owns all the Creation

10. Christ (the Son of God)

11. Yes

12. (a) Blessing

(b) A command is meant to be obeyed. To 'bless' is to bestow a benefit on (... a person etc.) by the spoken word.

(c) Blessing.

**Aim:** To come into the presence of God's Son, through whom all things are made; to confess the inadequacy of our care for the natural world and to seek the power of the Risen Christ to help us in God's work of rescuing and restoring His good Creation.

**Prayer:** A prayer based on the Aim above OR, alternatively, the following:  
Lord Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners, we seek the blessing of your presence with us now. We confess that we have not cared for the Creation as we should. Our actions have contributed to the harm done to, and the destruction of nature in ways we know and in ways we do not fully understand. Help us to regard the world, which came into being through you, with new eyes so we may treasure, protect and restore it. Amen.

**Words of a Hymn:** Choose a hymn of Confession, or aspiration to Holiness of life, to be read or sung. An example is, 'May the Mind of Christ my Saviour dwell in me from day to day' The words may be read by one or more readers, or sung if there is a musical instrument or, if suitable, incorporated into the initial Prayer.

**The Setting:**

1. In preparation, choose one or more pictures, which show various living creatures in their habitats, e.g. Koala in gumtree, Tiger in jungle, Whale breaching in the ocean. If pictures are of domesticated animals, include the scene in which they would be 'at home', e.g. sheep in a paddock.
2. Ask if any members of the group have recollections of coming across native animals in the wild, e.g. when on a bushwalk. Group members may like to share experiences which have perhaps surprised them or captivated their attention in some way.
3. State the purpose of these pictures, which is to focus our attention on the need of these animals for a particular habitat and for specific care or protection.

NOTE: A useful DVD, 'Amazing Grace' on the life of William Wilberforce, shows the Christian love of Wilberforce towards animals. (In the opening scene, Wilberforce, himself in poor health, orders his carriage stopped so he may intervene to stop cruelty to an exhausted horse lying on the ground. His action succeeds. The movie has many other examples of his Christian love towards animals.)

NEXT examine a picture of an animal deprived of a healthy habitat, such as the one shown at the end of the Study.

*Koalas usually get all their water from eating gumleaves. In the lead up to the Victorian bushfires of February 2009, the vegetation had dried out so much that koalas were forced to look far afield for water – their forest could no longer sustain them. A progressive drying out has taken place in southern latitudes of Australia, as predicted by CSIRO scientists, making extreme weather events more likely. Can we have a heart to make the changes necessary to reverse the damage done to natural areas?*

**Pre- Reading:** It is helpful to come to the Study having read 'The Parable of the Tenants' in Matthew 21: 33 - 41, which is referred to during this Study. Alternately, you may wish to take turns reading this passage verse by verse around the group.

**Questions:** These questions centre on Christ and the Creation; also His saving power. Use the Bible references when given as relevant to the Questions, or else simply discuss. (See ATTACHMENT 1 for Study 2 if you want to print copies of the Questions)

1. We have learnt in the last Study that God is the Owner of the Creation and that Christ was present at the Creation. *For whom* was the Creation made? - See Colossians 1 : 15, 16 and Hebrews 1 : 2 .

2. How did the tenants in the 'Parable of the Tenants' (Matthew 21 : 33 – 41) behave towards the property of the Owner?

3. Have we been under the impression that the Earth and all it contains has been made solely for humans? This view of the world is known as 'anthropocentrism'. It is a self-centred view. However, if the Creation is not 'ours', what role has God given us? See Genesis 2 : 15, Matthew 25 : 14 .

4. There is a view other than the anthropocentric one. Read the well-known and loved verse, John 3 :16. In the phrase, 'God so loved the world...' the word for 'world' in Greek is 'cosmos' and does not refer to people only but to the whole of God's Creation. What does this mean for us if God gave His only beloved Son for the whole *cosmos*?

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A story may help here:

In the days when teams of bullocks were used to haul logs from the forest, there was a bullock driver who was very harsh with his animals. His spare time was spent in town at the Pub, drinking with his mates.

It so happened that a Preacher came to the town and the Bullock Driver went to hear him. He was genuinely converted and, after a time, wanted to share his new-found faith with his mates at the Pub. However, they just laughed at him saying, 'You'll never be a preacher - you're too uneducated!' The Bullock Driver thought about their words for a bit and then replied, 'My bullocks know I'm a Christian!' For, since his conversion, the swearing and ill-treatment of his animals had stopped and he now had a bond of care for them, to which they had also responded. His close acquaintance with Jesus had brought about repentance in his attitude to his animals.

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5. Scripture uses images involving animals to show what God's love for people is like. See John 10 : 14, Matthew 23 : 37 and Exodus 19 : 4. (The last may be unfamiliar to us and need some explanation; when an eagle makes its nest it may choose a high, rocky cliff or outcrop. When it's time for the chicks to learn to fly, the mother eagle pushes them over the edge then, as they tumble, swoops underneath and catches them on her wings and bears them up to the nest again, until their own efforts at flight are successful.) In using such images, does God show his love includes animals themselves as well as humans?

6. Would God love His Creation even if humans were not present? See Job 38: 25 - 27 and Job 38 : 39 - 41.

7. Let us examine the problem the Earth faces, as set out in the Bible. Following the Fall of Adam and Eve, what do we find happens to Man's relationship with the earth, (a) once he is without fellowship with God - Genesis 3 : 17 - 19, and (b) lacking in respect towards Him? - Hosea 4 : 1 - 3.

8. Read Isaiah 5 : 8 . These words were written around 2700 years ago. (a) What parallels do they describe from our lives today? (e.g. City or Rural? Park Ranger or Developer? Highway or walking track? etc.)

(b) What is the result, if people seek to extract all they can from the Earth and to remove all remaining vestiges of nature? - See Isaiah 5 : 9, 10 .

9. We know the problems are great and that we are weak. (a) What made Peter and John different from the way they had been in the past, and able to stand where they had been weak before? (See Acts 4 : 13). (b) Why do we also need 'the power of the Son'?

**Discussion Time:** Choose one or two Questions of interest to your Group. Make sure to leave sufficient time at the end of the Discussion to finish off with a prayer.

1. Before assigning all blame to 'greed', perhaps we need to look at the 'Unlikely Suspects' in the picture. Any individual needs food, clothing, shelter and energy supplies - our 'Basic Needs'. All basic needs are supplied from the Earth and require a defined area of the earth and sea to be under production to meet the needs of that one individual, through activities such as Agriculture, Forestry, Mining and Fisheries, i.e. through Primary Industry. Secondary Industry, such as the processing and packaging of food, is based on Primary Industry. Products are distributed via the Transport and Retail sectors and all this is organised through Government, which raises taxes on these activities and provides services such as Health, Education, Policing and so on. In a society organised in this way, money (cash), which is the medium of exchange for goods and services, becomes a necessity. All money is generated through putting the Earth under production and all money is eventually spent on acquiring the basic needs Earth provides. So, is the problem money? Or is it the *scale* of economic activity rather than the activity itself? If it is the scale of the activity, what has caused this to be so great?

2. The world population is currently very high. (How high?) Calculations of how low it should be to safeguard other species and their habitats vary, but often come in at well below one billion. Could better medical care, which improves our survival rate, be the Unlikely Suspect leading to an over-crowded Earth? Could better Nutrition be to blame? Or Modern Technology? All these blessings have played their part in improving our survival rate. If our survival rate has gone up, what ought we to do to counter-balance this and ensure a place on Earth for the rest of God's creation?

3. Read Matthew 21 : 33 - 41. Should we call anything 'mine' or 'ours'? To whom do all things really belong? If we have received enough to live on, how should we respond?

4. We know God gave His Son for us and, indeed, for the world as a whole (*cosmos*). In responding to the love of God as shown in Christ, how might we include in our prayers and actions a greater level of concern for the natural world?

### **ATTACHMENT 3**

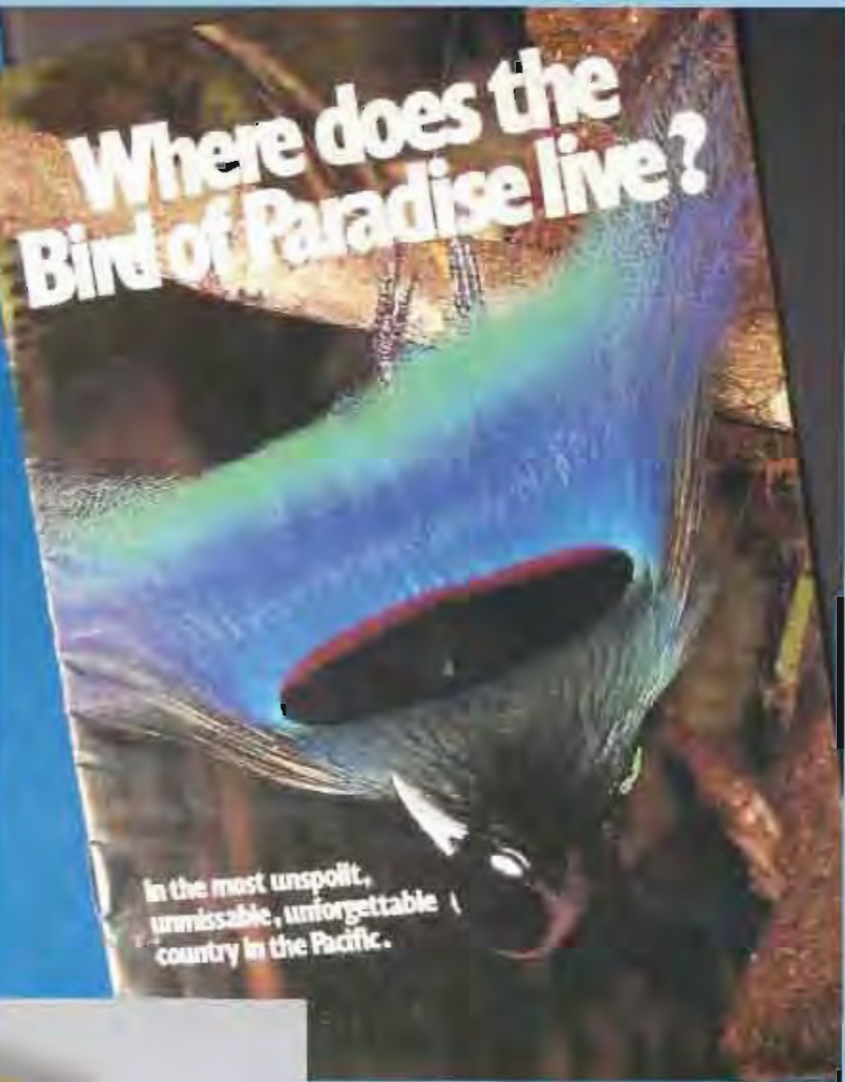
### **Photos**

#### **Study 3 CARING FOR THE CREATION**

1. Familiar Scene - Cup of coffee, cardboard package of biscuits, wooden coffee table
2. Blue Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea rudolphi* (Length 30 cm excluding plumes)  
Photo: Air Niugini in flight brochure
3. Lesser Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea minor* (Length 33 cm excluding plumes)  
Photo - 'The Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds' by William T. Cooper and Joseph M. Forshaw
4. Alexandra's Birdwing Butterfly *Ornithoptera alexandrae* (male, 18 cm wingspan)  
Photo - 'The National Butterflies of Papua New Guinea' by G. A. Mitchell
5. Alexandra's Birdwing Butterfly *Ornithoptera alexandrae* (female; this specimen has wingspan 23 cm; can be up to 31 cm) Photo - (as for 4. above)



1





4



5

**Psalms of Confession:** The group may take turns to read verses from the Psalms along the theme of confession:

Psalm 25 : 8 – 11    Psalm 32 : 2 – 6    Psalm 51 : 4, 16, 17

**Concluding Prayer:** in this Prayer, try to gather together some of the points which have arisen during the Bible Study.

EXAMPLE: Lord Jesus, thank you for your perfect love for us. Forgive us for the things we have knowingly done that harm your Creation and for those things we have unknowingly done. We confess that we have been self-centred and seek your forgiveness and renewal of heart, through your death on the Cross for our sins. Lord God, the task of caring for your good Creation is great but we are encouraged by Jesus' words, spoken of the woman that anointed his feet, "She has done what she could." In Jesus' holy Name we pray. Amen.

**Photo:** *Koala deprived of its own healthy habitat*



Caring for the Creation ATTACHMENT 1 for Study 2 - WORKSHEET

You may use this Worksheet to answer the Questions after reading Matthew 21:33-41

1. We have learnt in the last Study that God is the Owner of the Creation and that Christ was present at the Creation. *For whom* was the Creation made? - See Colossians 1 : 15, 16 and Hebrews 1 : 2 .

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

2. How did the tenants in the 'Parable of the Tenants' (Matthew 21 : 33 – 41) behave towards the property of the Owner?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have we been under the impression that the Earth and all it contains has been made solely for humans? This view of the world is known as 'anthropocentrism'. It is a self-centred view. However, if the Creation is not 'ours', what role has God given us? See Genesis 2 : 15, Matthew 25 : 14 .

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

4. There is a view other than the anthropocentric one. Read the well-known and loved verse, John 3 :16. In the phrase, '*God so loved the world...*' the word for 'world' in Greek is 'cosmos' and does not refer to people only but to the whole of God's Creation. What does this mean for us if God gave His only beloved Son for the whole *cosmos*?

A story may help here:

In the days when teams of bullocks were used to haul logs from the forest, there was a bullock driver who was very harsh with his animals. His spare time was spent in town at the Pub, drinking with his mates.

It so happened that a Preacher came to the town and the Bullock Driver went to hear him. He was genuinely converted and, after a time, wanted to share his new-found faith with his mates at the Pub. However, they just laughed at him saying, 'You'll never be a preacher - you're too uneducated!' The Bullock Driver thought about their words for a bit and then replied, 'My bullocks know I'm a Christian!' For, since his conversion, the swearing and ill-treatment of his animals had stopped and he now had a bond of care for them, to which they also had responded. His close acquaintance with Jesus had brought about repentance in his attitude towards his animals.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Scripture uses images involving animals to show us what God's love for people is like. See John 10 : 14, Matthew 23 : 37 and Exodus 19 : 4. (The last may be unfamiliar to us and need some explanation: when an eagle makes its nest it may choose a high, rocky cliff or outcrop. When it's time for the chicks to learn to fly, the mother eagle pushes them over the edge then, as they tumble, swoops underneath and catches them on her wings and bears them up to the nest again, until their own efforts at

flight are successful.) In using such images, does God show his love includes animals themselves as well as humans?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Would God love His Creation even if humans were not present? See Job 38: 25 - 27 and Job 38 : 39 - 41.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Let us examine the problem the Earth faces, as set out in the Bible. Following the Fall of Adam and Eve, what do we find happens to Man's relationship with the earth, (a) once he is without fellowship with God - Genesis 3 : 17 - 19, and (b) lacking in respect towards Him? - Hosea 4 : 1 - 3.

Answer: (a) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Read Isaiah 5 : 8 . These words were written around 2700 years ago. (a) What parallels do they describe from our lives today? (City or Rural? Park Ranger or Developer? Highway or walking track? etc.)

Answer: a) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) What is the result, if people seek to extract all they can from the Earth and to remove all remaining vestiges of nature? - See Isaiah 5 : 9, 10 .

Answer: b) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. We know the problems are great and that we are weak. (a) What made Peter and John different from the way they had been in the past, and able to stand where they had been weak before? (See Acts 4 : 13). (b) Why do we also need 'the power of the Son'?

Answer: (a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

*Answers to some questions may vary.*

1. For Christ, the Son
2. As though the property was theirs / they abused the Owner's property
3. The role of stewardship; to look after it for the Owner, as well as to receive a living for themselves.
4. God saved us so that we would not only care for each other but for the whole Creation.
5. Yes.
6. Yes, he would.
7. a) The Earth is cursed because of his actions; it will be a struggle to overcome thorns and thistles and to grow food  
b) Because of Man's actions, the land mourns and the animals, birds and fish are dying.
8. a) May be either city or country, where adequate reserves are not set aside for the benefit of all the species belonging to the area and where every scrap of land is taken for economic advantage. e.g. for agriculture or housing.  
b) Productivity of the land declines, biodiversity of animals and plants declines.
9. a) They had been with Jesus  
b) Otherwise we are powerless to overcome evils and set things right.

**Aim:** To submit humbly to God's purpose for us as appointed stewards of His Creation. To seek the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to restore the health, well-being and diversity of God's good Creation on Earth.

**Prayer:** A prayer based on the Aim above.

**EXAMPLE:** O God, awesome Creator, help us to acknowledge our part in the decline of your good and marvellous Creation, in ways we know about and also in ways we do not fully understand. Guide us by your Holy Spirit to a clearer view of your will for the well-being of the natural world and give us your Spirit's power to take our first step with you in restoring your Creation. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Words of a Hymn:** Choose a hymn, such as '*Breathe on me, Breath of God*', to invite the Holy Spirit into our lives. Words may be read or sung, if a musical instrument is available. (NOTE: if using this particular hymn, in it we are reminded to love what Christ loves and one of these things is His Creation. In the last verse of this hymn we need to acknowledge that, while our hope is in eternity, this does not free us of responsibility here, for The Lord's Prayer says, '*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth...*')

### **The Setting:**

1. Bring along 2 or 3 everyday objects whose origin in nature you are aware of, together with pictures, photos or drawings that show their origins. *Example:* A cup of coffee, small coffee table and cardboard package of biscuits; photo of a native forest. (See **ATTACHMENT 3** - Resource Photos - for Study 3)
2. Talk about these items: they are familiar objects, used by many people. Ask the question, 'How many such items do you think may be purchased or acquired daily throughout the world - Hundreds? Thousands? Millions? More than that?'  
*Example above:* How many cups of coffee might the average person drink daily? So, how many cups for a population of 6.8 billion people? How many coffee tables or other timber furniture items might be bought from stores globally? How many cardboard boxes do we see on supermarket shelves and how many might be purchased globally?
3. Use the picture(s) that show the link to the origins on Earth of these everyday objects and discuss the effect that so many average consumers must have on the species and ecosystems from which these items have originally come.  
*Example above:* (a) Photo of the rare Blue Bird of Paradise. Habitat cleared to plant Coffee. (b) Painting of *Paradisaea minor* - Habitat clearfelled for woodchips to make cardboard boxes. (c) Picture of the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing Butterfly, the largest butterfly in the world. Its native forest logged for timber products and planted with Oil Palm instead.
4. Ask, 'How did the problems faced by the natural world get to be so big? Expect answers such as 'Population Increase' (*Why?* - Better medical care, better nutrition, modern technology), Increased Consumption per capita (*Why?* - Greater access to resources globally due to fossil fuels, especially Oil) and 'Greed' (*Why?* If greed has been present in human nature throughout history, is there any particular reason to suspect this is a greater problem at the present time? Or is it the greed of the average individual, multiplied by the total number of people that makes this a major factor?)

**Psalms of Regeneration:** A chorus based on Psalm 51:10 - 15 may read or be sung:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God  
And renew a right spirit within me (Repeat)  
Cast me not away from thy presence, O Lord  
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me  
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation  
And renew a right spirit within me.*

(See Song 434 Vol. A 'The Resource Chorus Book PRAISE AND WORSHIP, copyright 1990 Resource Christian Music P/L, Unit 4/2, Garden Boulevard, Dingley VIC 3172)

Another relevant Psalm is Ps 32 : 1 - 5.

**Pre-Reading:** It is helpful if those in the group have had the opportunity to read Genesis 2 : 4 - 3 : 19 beforehand. If not, allow a few minutes for quiet reading of this passage.

**Questions:** (See Study 3 Attachments 1 for Worksheet and 2 for Answers)

**PART A** In the first part of this Study, we will contrast the 'OLD Adam' with the 'NEW Adam' (Christ) and consider our transformation by the Holy Spirit from old to new.

1. (OLD) What does Genesis 2 : 15 tell us about God's purpose for mankind? Some clues are found in the Hebrew words used. 'To work / till it' is the word ABAD, which means 'to serve'. 'To take care of / keep' uses the word SHAMAR, which means 'To safeguard'.

(NEW) What does John 1 : 9 - 12 tell us about the purpose of Christ in coming into the world?

2. (OLD) Read Genesis 2 : 16, 17 and Genesis 3 : 4 - 6. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, who were they placing as 'number 1' in their lives?

(NEW) Read Luke 22 : 42. When Jesus chose to obey God, who was He placing as 'number 1' in His life?

3. (OLD) What were the consequences of sin for Adam and Eve, in relation to  
(a) God (b) each other (c) the Earth?

(NEW) What are the consequences of Christ's obedience to God for our relationships with (a) God (b) each other (c) the Earth? Useful verses are : Romans 5 : 15 - 19, 2 Corinthians 5 : 19, John 3 : 16. Note in the last two Bible references, that the word 'cosmos' used in Greek refers to the whole world, not only to humans.

**PART B** In the second part of this Study, we will contrast God's plans for Israel in the Old Testament with God's plans for the Church in the New Testament.

4. (OLD) Read the blessing of Isaac on his son Jacob (later re-named 'Israel') in Genesis 28 : 3,4. Was 'procreation' to be an important means of the spreading of faith in God throughout the land?

We know that Jacob (Israel) later had 12 sons, from whom the 12 tribes of Israel were descended. In time, through Moses, Israel received the Ten Commandments and other laws from God. Those teachings were to be passed on to their children.

(NEW) Read Luke 6 : 12 - 16. Was 'procreation' to be an essential part in the spreading of faith in God in the New Testament? Also see John 3 : 3 - 6.

We know Jesus called his 12 disciples, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. They were with Him for 3 years, in which time He gave them His teachings. In time, they were sent out to spread the Gospel (Matthew 28 : 18 - 20).

5. (OLD) What promise did God give to Abram (Abraham) in Genesis 12 : 7 ? We know that God fulfilled His promise to Abraham of an earthly territory, with geographical boundaries, for his physical descendants. We also know that many times the nation of Israel displeased God, who told them that, just as He had driven out the Canaanites from the land because of their evil practices and given the land to the Israelites, so also He would do the same to the children of Israel if they did not obey Him.

(NEW) Read Luke 17 : 21. Is the Kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed, a physical place on Earth with defined boundaries?

We can conclude in this part of the Study that, in the Old Testament procreation and a physical territory for His people were part of God's plans but in the New Testament, procreation formed no essential part in the spreading of the Gospel and Jesus did not promise His followers an earthly territory, rather a new heart with which to honour God.

**PART C** Between the Old and the New, the Biblical story is one of cycles with human failure and divine intervention.

Read the following biblical passages as a meditation, *antiphonally*, by dividing the group into two; LEFT and RIGHT. Pause at the end of each section, after 'Together' and think about the words. Numbers in brackets ( ) are to references provided at the end.

**LEFT:** If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways ...

**RIGHT:** ... then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land. (1)

**L:** If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load ...

**R:** ... do not leave it there, be sure you help him with it. (2)

**L:** The wolf will live with the lamb ...

**R:** ... and a little child will lead them. (3)

- L: Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field ...  
R: ... till no space is left and you live alone in the land. (4)
- Together:** You are concerned for both men and animals alike... (5)  
...for you created all things. (6)
- L: Through him all things were made ...  
R: ... without him nothing was made, that has been made. (7)
- L: The creation waits in eager expectation ...  
R: ...for the sons of God to be revealed. (8)
- L: Don't muzzle an ox as it treads out the grain (9)  
R: No creature is hidden from God's sight. (10)
- Together:** God so loved the world that he gave his only Son (11)
- L: You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures ...  
R: ...male and female, to keep them alive with you. (12)
- L: I now establish my covenant with you ... and with every living creature ...  
R: ... all the wild animals ... - every living creature on earth. (13)
- L: Let no one blithely think, when he hears the warnings ...  
... "I shall prosper, even though I walk in my own stubborn way."  
R: The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulphur -  
Nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. (14)
- Together:** I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. (15)

Refs: (1) 2 Chronicles 7:14 (2) Exodus 23:5 (3) Isaiah 11:6,7 (4) Isaiah 5:8-10 (5) Ps 36:6  
(6) Rev. 4:11 (7) John 1:2 (8) Romans 8:19 (9) Deuteronomy 25:4 (10) Hebrews 4:13 (11)  
John 3:16 (12) Genesis 6:19 (13) Genesis 9:9,10 (14) Deuteronomy 29:19,23 (15) Jer. 31:33

**Discussion Time:** Choose one or two Questions of interest to your Group. Make sure to leave sufficient time at the end of the Discussion to finish off with prayer.

1. With 6.8 billion people in the world, each taking their daily requirements from nature, the task of restoration is daunting; yet when there were only half as many people, within living memory perhaps of some present in the group, less than half the damage had been done. If the gift of better medical care is the main reason for our improved survival rate, might we perhaps show gratitude for this good gift by encouraging smaller families? If our ancestors in the not-too-distant past, before our modern medical care, saw many a much-loved child die of now preventable diseases, is it as much of a sacrifice for us to 'give up' a much-wanted imaginary child in comparison to our ancestors' grief of losing an actual child? Might the natural world recover better with fewer of us?

2. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, per capita consumption globally increased ten times (X10). The main reason was the availability of fossil fuels, combined with modern technology. If we have such things as motor vehicles (= modern technology + oil) to thank for our improved living standards, should we have counterbalanced our increased consumption of resources by reducing family size even further in order that there would be fewer consumers? Are there other ways of reducing consumption? *NOTE:* Sharing with others is a social justice matter and lies outside the scope of the discussion here. Once a tree or forest is cut down, it and all life dependent on it is gone, irrespective of how equitably profits and products based on the tree(s) are shared. Note also that if we reduce our personal consumption but spend the money instead on services provided by others, those others will consume with 'our' money what we did not. The same applies to donations, helpful though they are to other people.
3. What advantages are there to reducing waste through recycling? A British study revealed that up to 80 lifetimes of conscientious recycling are completely cancelled out by the arrival of one person via the airport or the maternity ward - important though recycling may be. (p. 130, *'Overloading Australia'* by Mark O'Connor and William Lines. published by Envirobook, Canterbury NSW)
4. Is the proper management of society the best answer to human impact on the natural world? Example: Water restrictions can greatly reduce per capita consumption, sometimes even halving consumption while population doubles. Can that go on forever? What about renewable energy? What kind of energy is needed to manufacture the technology for renewables such as solar panels or wind generators - renewable energy or fossil fuels? (NOTE: While oil is a high energy store, coming from a point source in the ground, solar energy is low power and requires a large area under production; this often competes with other land uses. In regard to biofuels, only 1% of solar energy that falls on a leaf is used in photosynthesis and therefore stored.)
5. Many people place their faith in the humanity to come up with technical answers to the environmental disasters faced by the world. Should we carry on as we are at present in the hope that such solutions are found?
6. Some Church people may say, 'The world is going to end anyway,' or 'Our homeland is in Heaven.' In Genesis chapter 3, Adam and Eve tried (unsuccessfully) to avoid punishment by shifting the blame instead of admitting guilt. Do we, too, sometimes try to avoid our responsibility to reverse damage done to the Creation? Are we likely to 'get away with' avoiding responsibility?

**Concluding Prayer:** In this Prayer, try to gather together some of the points which have arisen during the Bible study and Discussion, which seek humbly for a **REGENERATION** of our lives, through a renewing of our attitudes and actions, that we by the power of the Holy Spirit may make a positive change to the well-being of God's good Creation. (Alternately, the opening prayer may be repeated here.)

The group may then join in with an affirmation from Philippians: 'I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power.' - Phil. 4 : 13

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Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part A:**

1. OLD Gen. 2 : 15 We are to 'serve' the Earth. We are to 'safeguard' the Earth.

NEW John 1 : 9 - 12 He came to bring 'light' to mankind; to give those who believe the right to become children of God (a transformation of heart).

2. OLD Gen 2: 16, 17, Gen 3 : 4 - 6 Themselves and their own 'wisdom'.

NEW Luke 22 : 42 His heavenly Father.

3. OLD: a) The bond of fellowship with God was broken  
b) They tried to shift the blame elsewhere; Eve to the serpent, Adam to Eve and to God for giving him Eve. This 'blame game' broke their relationship with each other.  
c) The earth became 'cursed', hard to work and less productive.

NEW: a) God reconciled us to Himself through Christ  
b) We receive God's abundant provision of grace and gift of righteousness through Christ, to equip us in our relationships with each other  
c) God's love is shown in Christ: in saving us who believe this message, He enables us to show that love to the whole world (cosmos).

**Part B:**

4. OLD Gen 28 : 3,4 Yes; God's blessing was that Israel's numbers were to increase, so they might take possession of the land, replacing the Canaanites.

NEW Luke 6 : 12 - 16 No. Jesus had no descendants. He chose 12 disciples to represent the 12 tribes. In John 3 : 3 - 6, we learn that to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be 'born again', of 'water and the Spirit'.

5. OLD Gen 12 : 7 The 'Promised Land' - an actual territory

NEW Luke 17 : 21 No. The Kingdom of God is 'within' us.

**RESOURCE PHOTOS** (As attachment 3)

1. Coffee table with cup of coffee, packet of biscuits
2. Blue Bird of Paradise - *Air Niugini flight brochure*
3. Lesser Bird of Paradise, *Paradisaea minor* – *The Birds of Paradise and Bower Birds.* by William T. Cooper and Joseph M. Forshaw
4. Queen Alexandra's Birdwing Butterfly (male) – *The National Butterflies of Papua New Guinea.* by G.A Mitchell; a publication of the Wildlife Branch of the PNG Department of Natural Resources
5. Queen Alexandra's Birdwing Butterfly (female - brown) – as for (4)

