

Called to Be Stewards of Creation By Tom East

Purpose

We are called to appreciate, revere, and care for God's creation. In this session, participants consider the four elements to this call: enjoying nature, appreciating creation, seeing God in creation, and caring for God's creation as stewards. In this session, participants reflect individually and work in groups to identify practical ways that all of us can make a difference in caring for creation.

Note to Leader: In the final activity, participants work in groups to brainstorm a project they could do together to care for creation. Consider choosing one or more of these projects to implement as a community in the coming weeks.

See Catechism of the Catholic Church #290, 341 and 315 and Catholic Social Teaching – Care for God's Creation.

Session at a Glance

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| 7:00 p.m. | Welcome, Introductions, and Activity |
| 7:10 p.m. | Being Grateful to God Our Creator |
| Extend the Session: Prayer of Gratitude (add 10 minutes) | |
| 7:20 p.m. | Seeing God in Creation |
| Extend the Session: For the Love of God's House (add 10 minutes) | |
| 7:35 p.m. | Being a Steward |
| 7:45 p.m. | Journal Reflection |
| 7:55 p.m. | Stewardship Project |
| 8:10 p.m. | Closing Prayer |
| 8:20 p.m. | Announcements and Refreshments |
| 8:30 p.m. | Good Night! |

Extend the Session: For the Love of God's House (10 minutes)

In this option, participants reflect on the Gospel in which Jesus turns over the tables in the temple. They will discuss the implications of this reading for our reflection on caring for creation.

Invite someone to proclaim Mark 11:15-19. Provide a brief reflection:

For the love of God's house, Jesus turned the tables over in the temple. Jesus was filled with righteous anger because of the greedy and selfish acts occurring in a house of prayer. If we consider all of creation to be God's house, how do you think Jesus feels about the way we are treating creation today?

Post these questions on a newsprint sheet:

How do you see God's house, our creation, being treated?

What actions cause you to want to turn the tables?

Distribute index cards and invite youth to reflect on the questions for a few minutes individually. Invite youth to gather in groups of three to four to discuss their answers. Invite several volunteers to share with the large group

Extend the Session: Prayer of Gratitude (10 minutes)

In this session extension, participants work in groups to create a prayer of gratitude for creation.

Give each group an index card and pen. Ask each group to compose a prayer of gratitude for one aspect of creation. Each group should choose one person to read their prayer. Allow five minutes for groups to write their prayer. Invite the readers to share their prayers one at a time. The community should respond between each petition:

We thank you, Loving God.

Conclude with this prayer:

Creator God, you speak to us through your visible creation. Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, animals and plants all speak of God and symbolize your greatness and your presence in our lives. Help us to recognize your presence in creation and be good stewards of all you have created for it is good. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Sing “[Malo! Malo! Thanks Be to God](#)” (Spirit & Song, OCP) or another song with thanks to God as its theme.

Materials Needed

- Beach ball for the opening activity. Consider purchasing a globe beach ball using resources online, including this source: https://secure.cmalliance.org/cgi-bin/miva?Merchant2/merchant.mv+Screen=PROD&Store_Code=servicecenter&Product_Code=MM-BBEACH&Category_Code=mm

- Newsprint, markers, and nature-oriented magazines, enough for groups of six to eight members to each have supplies.

- Create a prayer focus for the closing prayer by setting up a small table with a cloth, Bible, cross, candle and globe

- Resource 1, The Story of the Boy and the Starfish, three copies

- Handout 1, Caring for Creation, one for each participant

- Handout 2, Caring for Creation Journal, one for each participant

- Pens or pencils, one for each participant

Note to Leader: For the session extensions, “For the Love of God’s House” and “Prayer of Gratitude,” you will need index cards.

Prepare in Advance

1. Prepare for personal sharing within session:

Provide a brief reflection on being thankful following the scripture reading.

Tell a personal story about something that you created that really revealed your personality.

Share a personal example about something you know about God because of creation.

Personal example of a time when you took care of something for someone else.

Examples for faith sharing questions.

Reflection on reading from 1 Timothy and the story of the Boy and the Starfish.

2. Recruit readers:

For the Scripture reading: Colossians 3:15-17

For the Scripture reading: Job 12: 7-10

For the two readings about stewardship:

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 and 1 Peter 4:10

For the reading in the closing prayer:

1 Timothy 4:12-16

Find three people to read and act out the story of the Boy and the Starfish using Resource 1.

3. Set up tables for refreshments (if you are serving any) and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and name tags. (Skip the name tags if participants know each other and you know them. However, if they wear nametags, you wear one, too.) Hospitality is important: As the facilitator, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

Note to Leader: If using Extend the Session, For the Love of God's House, create a newsprint sheet with these two reflection questions:

How do you see God's house, our creation, being treated?

What actions cause you to want to turn the tables?

Session Outline

Welcome, Introductions, and Activity (10 minutes)

Greet participants as they arrive, and ask them to take a seat. As others arrive, ask them to talk to each other about a favorite vacation. If they don't know one another, have them share their names as they share.

When everyone is gathered, begin the session with the following activity:

Earthball

Earthball is like team volleyball sitting down with one team using a beach ball. The object of the game is for the group to see how many times they can hit the beach ball without the ball hitting the ground. As in volleyball, the same person cannot hit the ball twice in a row. A good "record" to give as a goal is 50. The group will find this more difficult than they expected. As a result, they will begin a little halfhearted and get more intense as they go along. Count out loud and encourage the group to count with you.

After you conclude the activity, introduce the topic with these or similar words:

That's awesome! Some of us say the word "awesome" a lot. It means that we are struck with awe—amazed. That's how we should feel about creation. God's handiwork in all of creation is awesome. We should enjoy creation and be thankful.

I invite you now to sit comfortably and close your eyes. Picture your favorite place—the most beautiful place that you have ever been. Spend a moment taking in the sights. What do you see? What do you notice? What does it smell like?

Allow a moment of quiet.

At this time I would ask you to turn to a partner and share about your favorite place. You each have one minute to share.

After two or three minutes, call the group back and present some key ideas about enjoying, appreciating, and caring for creation.

Tonight's session is about our call care of creation. Caring for Creation is one of the principles of Catholic social teaching.

Distribute Handout 1, Caring for God's Creation. Ask volunteers to read the paragraphs about Caring for God's Creation and Stewardship. Continue with these ideas:

We are called to be stewards of creation. This call actually has several parts to it. Our first responsibility is to enjoy creation. We take the time and allow ourselves to be awestruck and impressed with the animals, plants, and geography of God's work of art. Secondly, we are called to be grateful, to share our appreciation of all that God has given us as gift. Thirdly, we are called to see God in creation, to sense the Creator. Our fourth call is to be good stewards of God's creation, which means we are called to do what we can to take care of creation.

Being Grateful to God Our Creator (10 minutes)

Have a reader proclaim Colossians 3:15-17. Provide a brief reflection on our call to be thankful. Include these ideas that distinguish between gratitude and entitlement:

We are called to be grateful. The opposite of being grateful is feeling entitled. Being entitled means that we are getting what already belongs to us. Sometimes, we fail to appreciate the gifts in our life, including this beautiful world in which we live. We act entitled when we waste what we have, when we seek out more and more possessions, and when we mistreat the environment. To be grateful means that we acknowledge the gift and the giver of the gift. In our case, we acknowledge the gift of creation and our loving God, who gives us life.

Divide into small circle groups of six to eight people by gathering pairs together. Have one or two adult leaders in each group. Introduce the first question for sharing:

What is one aspect of creation for which you are especially grateful? Please take a moment of silence to reflect then share in your circle. Whoever goes first should pick someone to go next. Continue until each person has a chance to share.

Ask the small groups to come back together as one large group. Pick up the beach ball, and invite participants to shout out something that they are grateful for when they receive the ball and then throw to someone else. Continue until those who wanted to share have had a chance to share.

Seeing God in Creation (15 minutes)

Step One (5 minutes): Begin by telling a personal story about something that you created that really revealed your personality, or tell about something that someone you know created that revealed something about them. After your story, ask participants to reflect on this question:

Have you every created something that really demonstrated your personality? Think of a drawing, a piece of art, an essay, a poem, or a song. Someone who experiences your creation knows a little bit about you because of that.

Invite two or three volunteers to share examples with the group. Continue with these ideas:

God is our creator and created us in love. He created all of heaven and earth. Animals, plants, mountains, rivers, and oceans were all created by God, in love. Creation reveals the one who created. We are surrounded by the beauty of trees, rivers, lakes, oceans, hills, and mountains. The beauty that surrounds us shows us something about who God is.

Have a reader proclaim Job 12:7-10. Provide a brief reflection on our call to see God in creation. Include these ideas:

God holds our lives in His hands. We should listen to creation, to the animals and the plants to learn how to quiet ourselves and rest in God.

Share a personal example for something that you know about God because of creation. (For example, you might share that you know that God is generous because of the abundance and variety of food that surrounds us, or you know that God loves beauty because of the magnificence of a sunset at the beach.)

Step Two (10 minutes): Ask participants to return to their small groups and to create a newsprint report of something that they know about God because of creation. Distribute newsprint, markers, scissors, glue sticks, and magazines to each group. Allow time for groups to create a report. Each group should choose someone to share about their report and someone to hold the newsprint.

Gather as a large group. Invite groups to share their reports. Conclude this portion of the session by summarizing ideas in the reports and by reminding participants of our four calls: to enjoy creation, to be grateful to God for creation, to see God in creation, and to care for creation. Up to this point, we have spent time working on the first three calls.

Being a Steward (10 minutes)

Introduce stewardship with these or similar words:

We are called to be good stewards of God's creation, which means we are called to do what we can to take care of creation.

Ask participants to reflect for a moment and share with a partner about the following question:

Think of a time when someone asked you to take care of something for them. What did it feel like to have that responsibility?

Invite one or two people to share with the large group. Share a personal example. Invite volunteers to proclaim 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 and 1 Peter 4:10.

Share a reflection in these or your own words:

These readings remind us that we are stewards of creation and of God's mystery. This is a definition of stewardship from a faith perspective:

Stewardship

The practice of considering and treating all things, the earth and one's own life (time, talent, and treasure) as belonging to God, and oneself as the manager, or "steward." (From Catholic Source Book, Harcourt Religion Publishers: Orlando, Florida, 4th Edition, 2007, page 95.)

A steward is someone who is charged by the owner of a large estate with taking care of the estate and managing the people and resources for the owner. As Christian leaders, we are called to be stewards. We have been asked by God to be stewards of creation and to care for God's creation—the earth—with reverence, wisdom, and compassion.

This earth belongs to God and we are the stewards of it. When we do things that protect the earth and care for it, we acknowledge that the earth is not ours to do with as we please; but we also show reverence to God, the Creator of all.

Stewardship can be contrasted with selfishness. When we are a steward, we acknowledge that everything belongs to God, and we are charged with taking care with

what we have. When we are selfish, we act as though everything belongs to us to use and discard as we wish.

Ask the group to brainstorm some ways that people are selfish in the way that they treat creation. Allow a few minutes of brainstorming, and then invite several responses.

Provide some ideas of ways that we can take care of creation: (These are also provided on Handout 2, Caring for Creation Journal.)

Being careful about the things we buy (or do not buy)
Such as avoiding buying products with excess packaging.
Finding ways to recycle and reuse
Helping your family recycle plastics, papers, and bottles.
Choosing ways to create less trash
Washing dishes after a picnic instead of using paper and plastic products.
Committing to use less energy
Walking, taking public transportation, or sharing a ride instead of riding or driving alone.
Speaking out
Becoming an advocate for creation by writing letters, organizing communities, participating in rallies, and voting for leaders who are committed to taking care of creation.

Journal Reflection (10 minutes)

Distribute Handout 2, Caring for Creation Journal. Read the faith sharing questions aloud and provide examples, if needed to make the questions more clear. Distribute pencils or pens. Ask participants to take a few minutes to reflect on the questions.

Gather back into small groups. Invite participants to share their responses to the first question. Participants should only share what they are comfortable sharing. The group leader should begin the sharing and invite someone to share. That person can share or pass, but they need to invite the next person. This should continue until each person has had a chance to share. After sharing on the first question, ask for volunteers to share about the second question.

Allow time for group sharing. Invite individuals to share responses to questions 1 or 2 with the large group.

Stewardship Project (15 minutes)

Give each group sheet of newsprint. Ask each group to create a plan that they could work on together to take care of creation:

Brainstorm things that you could work on together to help take care of creation.
(Consider some of the ideas from your journal.)
Choose one idea to work on together.
Identify three steps you could take to get started.

After 10 minutes of group work, invite groups to share a brief report with each other.

Following the reports, encourage the groups to continue working on and implementing their plans. Encourage individuals to reflect on the ideas in their journal for making a difference as an individual and as a community. Provide a summary of the session's key ideas about following the call to enjoy nature, appreciate creation, see God in creation, and care for God's creation.

Option: You may want to choose one of the projects as a group to implement together!

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather for the closing prayer in an outdoors location (if possible).

Gather

Sing "[Let All the Earth \(Psalm 66\)](#)," by Steve Angrisano and Tom Tomaszek (Spirit & Song, OCP).

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

Loving God,

You call us to be Christian Leaders.

You call us to be Stewards.

We thank you for all that you have given us.

Strengthen us so that we can take care of your creation

And show your love to others.

We ask this prayer in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Listen

Invite the reader to proclaim 1 Timothy 4:12-16. Allow a few moments of silence after the reading.

Invite the three team members to act out the Story of the Boy and the Starfish using Resource 2.

Provide a personal reflection on the reading and story. Consider this focus: sometimes it feels overwhelming to think of how one person can make a difference, but each caring act makes a difference. Don't ever let someone tell you can't do something because you are young.

Respond and Go Forth

Invite the group to stand in a circle facing the prayer focus. Lead them in this prayer meditation.

As we begin, I ask you to stand with your hands at your side. Reflect on the ways that you can make a difference in caring for creation as an individual. What is one thing you

could commit to doing when you get home? Take a moment of quiet prayer to ask God to strengthen you in living this commitment.

Allow a moment of silence.

I ask you now to cross your hands in front of you with the right arm on the left. Now grab the hands of the people on each side of you. We need to ask God to strengthen us to care for His creation. For what shall we pray? I ask that you think of a word or phrase that symbolizes a gift that we will ask from God. Please share this word out loud. Allow a minute or two for sharing.

Now I ask you to continue holding hands but turn around facing outward by putting your head under your right arm.

Now we continue in prayer:

Loving God, we face outward on your creation.

You have given us every good thing.

You trust us to be good stewards.

Strengthen us and guide us to know your will in our lives.

Fill us with your Spirit and make us bold to share your goodness to ends of the Earth.

We make this prayer in Jesus name.

Amen.

Announcements and Refreshments (10 minutes)

Thank the young people for their participation. Make any needed announcements, and invite them to enjoy some refreshments.

Websites and links in this session were successfully accessed on February 26, 2008.

This session was written by Tom [East, D](#)irector of the Center for Ministry Development, Gig Harbor, Washington.

Resource 1

The Story of the Boy and the Starfish

Narrator: A man was walking on a beach which was covered with dead or dying Starfish.

(read slowly allowing the audience to visualize in their mind the beach, the man, the dying starfish)

These Starfish had been washed ashore. As he walked along he noticed a boy by the water's edge off in the distance. As he approached the boy he noticed the boy was throwing some of the Starfish into the sea.

Old Man: (Slowly ask this question to the boy) "Why are you throwing them back?" (Pause) "There are thousands of starfish here. (Look around – act it out) What you are doing isn't going to make much difference."

Boy: (Bend over and pick up a starfish and throw it back into the sea) "It makes a difference to this one!"

Handout 1

Caring for Creation

God is our creator and created us in love.
He created all of heaven and earth.
Animals, plants, mountains, rivers, oceans
were all created by God, in love. Creation
reveals the one who created. We are surrounded
by the beauty of big trees, water, and mountains. The beauty
that surrounds us shows us something about who God is.

Catholic Social Teaching Summary

Care for God's Creation

As creatures made in God's image, humans are charged in a special way with caring for creation; faithful stewardship of creation demands that we care for people and for the planet, that we respond to the needs of our own time and guarantee that future generations can draw generously on the resources of creation. (Adapted from Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, pages 4-6)

Stewardship

Stewards do not own; rather, they are charged with taking care of something that is not theirs. This Earth is God's and we are the stewards of it. When we do things that protect the Earth and care for it, we acknowledge that the Earth is not ours to do with as we please, but we also show reverence to God, the creator of all. (Drawn from the summary of Catholic Social Teaching as presented in the Young Neighbors in Action Program of the Center for Ministry Development.)

We are called to

Enjoy creation

Appreciate creation

See God in creation

Take care of God's creation

Handout 2

Caring for Creation Journal

Ways to Be a Good Steward

Being careful about the things we buy (or do not buy)

Such as avoiding buying products with excess packaging

Finding ways to recycle and reuse

Helping your family recycle plastics, papers and bottles

Choosing ways to create less trash

Washing dishes after a picnic instead of using paper and plastic products

Committing to use less energy

Walking, taking public transportation or sharing a ride instead of riding or driving alone

Speaking out

Becoming an advocate for creation by writing letters, organizing communities, participating in rallies and voting for leaders who are committed to taking care of creation

Journal Reflection

What can you do to be a good steward personally in your life?

How can I be careful about what I buy (or do not buy)?

How can I find ways to recycle and reuse?

How can I find ways to create less trash?

How can I find ways to use less energy?

How can I find ways to speak out and become an advocate for the environment?

What could you do as part of a team or community to be a good steward of creation?