

A black and white photograph of a person standing on a rock in a forest, looking at a body of water. The person is wearing a dark jacket and pants. The forest is dense with evergreen trees, and the water is calm, reflecting the surrounding foliage. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

FOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS

ARPACANADA.ca

SUMMARY

In this lesson, students explore seven principles of environmental stewardship and evaluate whether current environmental concerns are legitimate or unwarranted from a biblical perspective. Students will then pick a specific environmental concern and analyze it from a biblical worldview perspective.

For more information or to give feedback, contact info@arpacanada.ca

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

OVERVIEW

Environmental concerns are presented as one of the greatest issues in the world today.

Turn on the radio or TV, look through a newspaper or magazine, and you will undoubtedly come across environmental concerns, with climate change being the most prominent concern. How did environmental issues become such great concerns in the West so quickly? Are these concerns legitimate or overhyped? Are we being good stewards of the environment here in Canada?

Although mankind has a God-given mandate to care for this world, Christians don't usually consider environmental issues to be of much concern compared to other issues in society. The

next generation of students should be equipped to properly understand environmental concerns through the lens of special revelation (Scripture) and also the lens of general revelation (creation). This requires students to be knowledgeable about what Scripture says about man's care and dominion over the world as well as the minutiae of how God created the world.

Without this biblical and scientific knowledge, Christians will be at a loss of how to properly realize which environmental concerns are true problems and what are the best ways to address the problems. One danger is to value the environment more than we ought to and neglect God's command to have dominion over the earth. The opposite danger is to undervalue the world that God has created and make it increasingly difficult for humanity and all of creation to sing the praise the LORD.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What does the Bible have to say about how humans are to interact with the environment and other creatures?

In recent years, the secular world has become increasingly preoccupied with environmental issues such as climate change, renewable energy, pollution, and wildlife conservation, yet many Christians aren't entirely sure what the Bible has to say about these issues. The purpose of this lesson is to develop an understanding of human responsibility within creation.

EXPLORE THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Distribute *Handout 1 – The Biblical Principles of Environmental Stewardship* and have the students read the first six pages explaining the seven principles of stewardship from a biblical perspective. Encourage the students to highlight in one colour every scripture verse quoted or referenced, both in the text and in the citations. This will help the students understand that the need for robust environmental stewardship is based on Scripture. Encourage the students to use a second colour to highlight facts that we don't glean directly from scripture but that we learn from the study of the general revelation (e.g., scientific study). This will help students understand the how scientific study can help inform sound environmental stewardship.

EVALUATE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

Lead a class discussion around the sections the students highlighted. Consider:

- Should Christians practice environmental stewardship based exclusively on scripture? Exclusively on science? Or some combinations of the two?
- How might people interpret science wrongly? Is it possible for Christians to interpret scripture wrongly?

EVALUATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

After reading the seven principles and discussing the role of scripture and science in environmental stewardship, distribute *Handout 2 – Current Environmental Concerns*. Have the students evaluate, either individually or in groups, whether each concern could be a true concern based on these principles or if the concern conflicts with Scripture. In this exercise, encourage the students to answer based just on the biblical principles rather than on whatever scientific knowledge they have on the statement. The purpose of this exercise is to enable students to be able to identify which problems could be real or imagined from a Christian

EXTEND THESE PRINCIPLES TO LOCAL ISSUES

worldview even before considering scientific evidence. Students can evaluate all the statements, a selection of the statements, or new statements generated by the teacher or class.

Task the students with picking one environmental stewardship topic to research and apply the biblical principles to. Students can pick global or Canada-wide environmental concerns but encourage them to especially consider provincial and local concerns. The concern might be a personal concern of a student or a concern they've heard about in the media. The number of topics could be endless, but possible concerns could be:

- Climate change
- Biodiversity
- Soil erosion
- Agricultural practices
- Disposal of garbage and waste
- Pollination
- Energy production
- Natural resource management (e.g. forestry, oil and gas, fresh water)
- Conservation or management of a local species (e.g. salmon, deer, wolves)

Encourage the students to answer the following questions in a 2–3 page report:

- Describe the concern
- How might biblical principles apply to this concern?
- Is there any scientific knowledge about this concern?
- Is this a legitimate concern or an illegitimate concern?
- Discuss the costs (and any benefits) of the concern and discuss the benefits (and any costs) of taking action to address this concern. Consider *Biblical Principle 7* in particular for this point.
- Who should address this concern and what should be done about it, if anything?