

Called to Be A Steward of Creation

What it means to treasure earth and all that dwells in it

by Leisa Anslinger



“Do we really need all that stuff?”

As moving day approached, in one way or another, that question was part of every day: “Do we keep this or give it away?” “What will we have room for?” “Do we really need this?” If you have never moved, or haven’t done so for a few years, you may not realize how daunting a task this can be. For our family, a move to a different city after eleven years in the same house was cause for soul-searching along with the packing, sorting, and pitching. This was not only a practical exercise in the usefulness of objects. This was a moment in which to reflect on our call to be good stewards of creation.

It is about more than stuff!

The accumulation of unnecessary material goods can distract us from the needs of others, and can prevent us from giving to those who do not have what they need. The endless desire for more, better, bigger can be a sign of, or a cause of, placing the things of this world before the One who created it. Our priorities get out of order, and we put things before our need to care for the earth and all who inhabit it. We are called to care for all God creates: “The Lord’s are the



earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it.” (Ps 24:1)

Stewardship of creation is a sacred responsibility. Being created in God’s image and likeness means that we are called to collaborate in the on-going process of creation. God places all of creation in our care, and this is a sacred responsibility. To make something sacred means to make it holy; God has entrusted the earth and all who dwell in it into our hands in a partnership of holiness.

At the moment of creation, God said, “It is good.” All that God has created must be revered as “good.” The pinnacle of creation, of course, is humankind, and so stewardship of creation begins with a deep reverence for human life. The earth, water, and creatures are to be revered, too, as we recognize the sacred trust with which God gives all this to us. Disregard for people and natural resources is at its depth a breaking of the sacred responsibility each of us has toward all of creation.

The challenge: We know the challenge of being good stewards of so much! Care for “the world and those who dwell in it” are too often after-thoughts in a society that values acquisition of material

goods and takes for granted the renewing potential of our natural resources.

Let’s get practical. There are many small, practical things we can do to grow as stewards of creation. We will explore some of these on the reverse of this sheet.

Let’s be spiritual. Step back and look at the world through God’s eyes. Read the first two chapters of Genesis. There we are given the image of all of creation living in perfect interdependence. Humanity caring for the earth and its creatures, and even more, humans living in perfect relationship with their Creator. We cannot return to the ideal and innocent moment of creation, but we can contribute to the

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tending, nurturing, care and growing of humanity and the environment as an expression of our love of God and all God’s creation.



The Stewardship Project
www.GratefulDisciples.net

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. ...By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13: 34a-35)



Practical Ways to Steward Creation Well

Make care of creation a daily reality

Stewardship takes on new meaning as we grow in a vision for our lives that is rooted in a love of God and all of God's creation:

Walk with God: Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden, recognizing God as the Creator, standing in awe before God, and learning God's ways. As we "walk with God" each day, through prayer and a growing relationship with Jesus, we become more readily able to be good stewards of all of creation.

Be a steward of humanity: Human life is sacred and fragile. The protection, care, and reverencing of all of human life is the pinnacle of stewardship of God's creation: the unborn; the young; the elderly; those who are sick, dying, poor and vulnerable. Be a steward of humanity by serving others, through informed voting and participation in civil discourse, and in your compassionate and caring interactions with others.

Live a simpler lifestyle: We have to admit, most of us have and use far too much -- material possessions, natural resources, things that are made without consideration of the impact on the environment. When we decide to simplify our lifestyle, we are more intentional about what we have and use.

Care for the earth and natural resources: Recycle; avoid wastefulness of water and other natural resources; avoid pesticides and harmful chemicals in your yard or garden; purchase products that have been developed with the least negative impact on the environment.

Appreciate beauty: We are surrounded by beauty! Often we are so busy we do not see the beauty that is part of every day, no matter where we live: the beauty of another human being; the wonder of natural landscapes; art, music, architecture; engineering; dance; design. Appreciation of the beauty that surrounds us grows into a desire to care for and contribute to it. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote. Awareness of this beauty points our gaze toward the Creator of it all!



"Christians must beg God for the grace of conversion: the grace to know who they are, to whom they belong, how they are to live -- the grace to repent and change and grow, the grace to become good disciples and stewards.... Stewardship of disciples is not reducible only to one task or another. It involves embracing, cultivating, enjoying, sharing -- and sometimes also giving up -- the goods of human life. Christians live this way in the confidence that comes from faith. (SDR, 28)



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:12-14)

How Are You a Good Steward of Creation?

We are already stewards, whether we are conscious of it or not. We will always have ways to grow as stewards, too, aspects of our lives in which we don't care or share as readily as we should. How are you already living as a good steward of creation? What areas of your life need attention in order to steward creation better in the coming year? Use this space to record your thoughts and your commitment for the future: