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Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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A Christian View of the Environment

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V. **The source of our ecological crisis lies in man's fallen nature and abuse of his dominion.**

A. *Man is a rebel who has set himself at the center of the universe.*

1. Man has used his dominion wrongly.
2. Man has exploited created things as though they are nothing in themselves and as though he has an autonomous right to use them as he pleases.

2. *Man's fallen nature has expressed itself with regard to the creation in his use of time and money.*

1. Man's uncontrolled greed and haste have led to the deterioration of the environment.
2. We have been guided by the maxim that what we can do, we will do, particularly if it is the least time-consuming and least expensive alternative.

6. **The solution to the environmental crisis is the witness of the Christian community within the proper relationship between God, man, and nature.**

A. *We are called to exhibit our dominion rightly.*

1. As Christians we must treat nature as having value in itself and exercise dominion without being destructive (Matt. 6:26, 10:29).

2. This requires both a human and economic cost.
3. There are numerous Old Testament examples of the care with which Israel was to treat the environment.
 - a. Israel was to care for the land (Lev. 25: 1–12).
 2. Israel was to treat domesticated animals properly and respect wildlife (Deut. 25:4 and 22:6).
 3. The Lord judges those who misuse the land (Isa. 5:8–10).
 4. The Lord nurtured and cared for His creation (Job 38:25–28; Ps. 104:27–30).

2. *As the second Adam, Jesus redeems all of the effects of the curse (1 Cor. 15:21–22; Rom. 5:12–21).*

1. The first Adam brought a curse on man's relationship with his God, his relationship with other people, and his relationship with nature (Gen. 3:14–19).
2. Though the earth will eventually be destroyed, we should still work for healing now. As Christians, we can be rightly related to the creation.

3. *Christians, of all people, should not be destroyers.*

1. We may cut down a tree to build a house or make a fire, but not just to cut it down.
2. We have the right to rid our house of ants, but we should not forget to honor the ant where God made it to be.
3. When the church puts belief into practice, our humanity and sense of beauty are restored.

7. *The church in the past has failed in its mission of steward of the earth.*

- A. We have spoken out loudly against the materialism of science but have done little to show that we are not dominated by a technological orientation towards nature.
2. We are losing an evangelistic opportunity: many are seeking an improved environment, yet they also see that most Christians don't care.
3. While there is not necessarily anything wrong with profit in the marketplace, we must voluntarily limit ourselves and not allow something to be done just because it can.

4. If individually and as a Christian community we can treat with integrity the things God has made, and do so lovingly because they are His, things change.

For Further Reading

Badke, William. *Project Earth: Preserving the World God Created*. Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1991.

This book is a strongly written attempt to jar the church out of its environmental doldrums. Badke persuasively argues that the church needs to be at the forefront of the environmental movement because only Christianity has the right reasons to do so. The strict anti-growth perspective could have been toned down some. Especially helpful is an appendix of environmental tips for households and churches.

Beisner, E. Calvin. *Prospects for Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources, and the Future*. Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1990.

This book provides a carefully documented apologetic for the proposition that statistics can't always be believed. As bad as the environmental situation is, it is not as bad as some would have us believe. There is still a great deal about this earth that we don't know. Predictions concerning the future can be hopelessly flawed.

DeWitt, Calvin B., ed. *The Environment and the Christian: What Can We Learn from the New Testament?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1991.

A collection of essays defending an environmental ethic from a strictly New Testament perspective. What comes across clearly, however, is that the Old Testament still contains the foundation for any environmental ethic for a Christian. The New Testament adds to and confirms the Old Testament ethic in regards to nature. A criticism is that the book does not offer a strong enough rebuke of New Age thinking; Christianity is only offered as an "alternative."

Elsdon, Ron. *Bent World: A Christian Response to the Environmental Crisis*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1981.

Elsdon contributes a significant amount of information on the extent of the environmental crisis and the shortage of resources. He also outlines the basis of a Christian response and what options are available, both in attitude and practical steps.

Fumento, Michael. *Science Under Siege: Balancing Technology and the Environment*. New York, NY: William Morrow, 1993.

Michael Fumento skillfully investigates some of the biggest environmental scares of the last decade, such as alar, dioxin, agent orange, magnetic fields, and others, and concludes that the science on these issues is far from settled. Conflicting studies abound. Fumento also points out that many environmentalist organizations stand to gain financially whenever a new scare is either created or exaggerated.

Schaeffer, Francis. *Pollution and the Death of Man: A Christian View of Ecology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1970.

Much of the skeleton of the above outline is derived from this book. Though it dates back to 1970, it is still the best short treatment that deals with the environmental issue as a whole. While you won't find a lot of data concerning the ecological crisis, Schaeffer will walk you through how to think about this complex topic within the scope of a Christian world view.

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