

Series: On the Fringe

Lesson 4: Filled with Your Glory

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Decide whether caring for the environment is a Christian priority
- Identify ways in which caring for the environment affects people
- Evaluate the youth group's impact on the environment
- Consider whether there are changes the youth group could make to improve its environmental care

Materials Needed:

- ☐ One or two newspapers that people in your part of the world read (that can be torn)
- ☐ One or two National Geographic magazines (that can be torn)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Double-sided copies of handout "On the Fringe: Four," two to four
- ☐ Board and markers (prepared with the questions from Task One)
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ A large piece of chart paper or Bristol board
- ☐ Glue

Lead In:

Ask students whether they've been hearing about the environment a lot lately? Do they think it would be easy to find an article about the environment in these resources? Show the resources you have. Well, they are going to get a chance to show you how easy it is. Spread the resources out amongst your group members, along with scissors (you can tear if you don't have scissors handy), and instruct each student to find an article relating to an environmental issue.

After several minutes, allow students to share the articles they have chosen. Specifically, ask each student to summarize the problem and whether there is something that could have been done to prevent it or minimize its effects.

Transition by asking students if they think that the environment is a Christian concern. Solicit some answers and tell them that they are going to explore this very question in the lesson ahead.

Task One:

Ask for two to four volunteers who are willing to read Scripture out loud. Give each of them a double-sided copy of the handout, "On the Fringe: Four." Have the following questions written on the board. Have other students read each question out loud before the readers read the passages. Tell the students to listen both to the questions and the Scripture verses and that after you have read both, you will address each question together.

1. How do you think that God feels about creation?
2. Who is responsible for caring for the earth?
3. As Christians, why should caring for the environment and the earth be a priority to us?

4. What are the human consequences to environmental devastation? Think back to your articles. What were the human consequences in the environmental problems described there?
5. How are people on the fringe of society affected by this? Can you think of any example from your articles or from your memory?

Work together to answer each question one at a time. Use the scripture verses to inform your answers. Reread the scripture verses and the questions as needed. You can have a volunteer record answers on the board if you like. You can also make copies of the scripture verses for the students if you like. There are many ways of doing this task.

Below is a set of sample answers:

1. According to the verses on the handout, God seems pretty invested in creation. It belongs to God. God declares it to be wonderful. God knows it intimately.
2. God told people to take care of the earth.
3. First, because God made it. If God made something and loved it, shouldn't we take care of it? Second, because God told us to. Third, because we are dependent on it and everything it produces. Any one of those reasons should be motive enough to get moving.
4. There are many, many. The point here is to link the environment with human welfare. Environmental responsibility is not just about saving pandas 'cause they're cute. It's about the health of the planet and its inhabitants. It's hard to fulfill the great commandment or the great commission when you're dumping toxic waste in someone's home.
5. It is often the least resourceful who are most affected. The asthma epidemic in North America is one example of how an environmental problem affects some of our least powerful citizens. There are many more examples that are possible.

Task Two:

Divide the group into smaller groups of four to six. Give each group scrap paper and pens and tell them to jot down these questions. Read the questions and then instruct them to work together to answer both and be prepared to share their answers.

- Work together to decide what this group does that has a negative impact on the environment and what it does that has a positive impact on the environment.
- Is there any change that we could make to have a better impact on our environment?

While they are discussing, make three columns on the board (you can remove what is there from Task One). Label the first column “Positive Impact”, the second “Negative Impact”, and the third “Possible Changes”. When they are finished answering the two questions, have a volunteer come up to the board to record the groups’ answers. Solicit answers to each of the questions, while the volunteer fills in the columns. Ask the students if they agree with the answers. Have a look at what is there, especially in column one and two, working towards consensus on your positive and negative environmental impact.

Task Three:

Ask students to review the list of suggested changes in column three and decide if there are any on there that are not feasible. Can they be rewritten to make them feasible? If so, rewrite them. Now ask students to identify those that are easily changed. For example, if you waste a lot of paper making announcement sheets, you might decide that these will be e-mailed instead. If you play a lot of games with food, you might decide to play games with imperishable items more often. When you are finished the small changes, address the remaining changes. Can they be done? How? Work together to make an action plan. Record your plan on a piece of chart paper or Bristol board and post it in

your meeting room. Glue the articles from the Lead In to the plan as a reminder of the lesson and the problems in the world. Decide to be accountable to your group's plan.

Closing:

Gather around the plan and have some students pray for the problems described in the articles and for the contribution that your group hopes to make to environmental care.

Further Reading:

Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship by Tri Robinson

Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action by J. Matthew, M.D. Sleeth

The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action by R. J. Berry

Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility (Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy) by James A. Nash

For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care (Engaging Culture) by Steven Bouma-Prediger