



BE STEWARDS OF GOD'S EARTH

Environmentalism isn't reserved for Earth Day anymore. Now we're deluged year-round with information about saving the earth and combating climate change. Teenagers are taking charge with go-green efforts, raising awareness and leading many local initiatives to reduce their footprint.

God, who created our world and then sent Jesus to be its Savior, charged humans with caring for the planet. By conserving and preserving resources, we act as wise stewards of the land and blessings that God has given us.

The term "green Christianity" refers to the call to action that many believers are now undertaking—not as owners but as caretakers of the earth. There's even a *Green Bible*, which aims to help readers "in the work of healing and sustaining... God's vision for creation."

No matter your political stance on hot topics such as global warming, it's important to respect our earthly home and to model good environmental stewardship to teenagers. It's also important to remind them of the proper reasons and motives for maintaining the earth. By conserving our resources and giving credit to the God who created them in the first place, young people will "shine like stars in the universe" (Philippians 2:15, NIV)—a universe lovingly and masterfully created by the God we worship.

THE VIEW

In a national poll conducted by the Nature Conservancy:

- 73% of teenagers agreed that "previous generations have damaged our environment and left it to our generation to fix it."
- 66% of teens agreed with this statement: "Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of slowing economic growth."
- 36% of teens expressed interest in "joining an organization made up of and controlled by teens that was taking action to fight climate change."

TIPS >>>

In *Green Like God* (FaithWords), Jonathan Merritt rejects "pop environmentalism" and debunks the following three myths:

- **"Environmentalism is for tree-hugging secularist liberals."** Caring for creation isn't a "right-left issue," Merritt says, but a "moral-immoral issue" that God's people are called to address.
- **"The world is going to end anyway."** When Jesus returns, Merritt wants to be "caught in the act of loving people, worshipping Christ, and obeying all God's commands, including the command to care for his creation."
- **"Creation care distracts us from more important tasks."** Merritt says Christians can do evangelism and creation care simultaneously. A key part of Jesus' Great Commission, he says, is to teach converts to obey all God's commands—including being good stewards of the planet.

Because God wants to commune with us at all times, Merritt says, "he has made the whole world his sanctuary." So when we care for creation, we can encounter God more easily. After all, our Creator even became part of creation when Jesus came to earth as a human being.

Merritt encourages Christians to reject consumerism, avoid "affluenza," and embrace God's "divine plan": "valuing God above all else, loving others, and bestowing on creation the honor and respect that God has given it."

PONDER THIS

- Do you consider yourself an environmentalist? Why or why not? Why does that movement and Christianity often seem to clash?
- How would you rate yourself at being a steward of God's creation? What areas do you and your family need to work on?
- In what ways have your teenagers inspired you to go green or change your habits?





Hope for a Broken World

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Josh Griffin

When I prepared a sermon series about the environment (see Resource below), I was surprised to discover how much God talks about this topic. He has created an amazing playground we call earth, and all of creation is proclaiming God's glory.

By looking at creation, we can know several things about God: He watches over and cares for us. He is a rock in times of difficulty, whether that's temptation, failures, or disappointment. Finally, when God speaks, we can trust him.

Teenagers and their families have many opportunities to be faithful stewards of God's creation. You

can be less of a consumer, lower your gas consumption, change your light bulbs, and reuse, recycle, and repurpose. To gain a new perspective, you can also visit a country of "have nots."

Ultimately, the reason we need to save the planet and go green is because it's broken. When Adam and Eve sinned, God's perfect earth became a lost paradise. The Garden of Eden was shattered by sin and disorder and chaos. The kicker is that it's not just the planet that's broken; it's the people, too.

God the Creator sent a Savior, a rescuer for humanity. The "fix" is Jesus, who came to earth as God in

the flesh. He frees us from sin, which we can't do by ourselves. By giving us new life, Jesus makes each of us a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). God realizes our world is broken but gives us a new creation inside of us.

Although this world and its desires will pass away (1 John 2:17), anyone who believes in Jesus, the rescuer of humanity, will live forever with him.

We should all do our part to care for the earth, recognizing the Creator who made it in the first place. But when you hear people talking about saving the planet, remember that God has already taken care of that. He loves you and promises you a new, perfect home in heaven.

—*Save the Planet*

RESOURCE



In the three-week downloadable series *Save the Planet*, youth minister Josh Griffin explores how to care for the earth from a biblical perspective.

BIBLE FOCUS

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV)

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

Background: Timberlake began performing at a young age on *Star Search* and then *The New Mickey Mouse Club* with future girlfriend Britney Spears. He was part of the hit boy band 'N Sync before launching a solo career. Timberlake is infamous for his role in Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl wardrobe malfunction. He's also an actor, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. Timberlake is incredibly talented, and everything he touches seems to succeed. Unfortunately, his songs often glorify sex and hedonism.

Albums: *The 20/20 Experience* (2013), *FutureSex/LoveSounds* (2006), *Justified* (2002)

What Timberlake Says: When asked what advice he'd give his 16-year-old self, he says, "It's important to have things close to you that mean something to you rather than putting your importance and what everyone else thinks of you first."

Explore: Timberlake's music is all available on Spotify and other music services.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



HILLSONG UNITED

Background: This Australian band emerged from the Hillsong Church and was originally a youth ministry worship band. Over time, the songs were resonating with the larger church across the world, so they let go of the "youth" focus. Hillsong United is very popular, and many of their songs are sung across America every Sunday morning.

Albums: *Zion* (2013), *Aftermath* (2011), *All of the Above* (2006)

What Hillsong United Says: About the new album, Matt Crocker says, "My favorite thing about *Zion* is that it all points to one thing—the kingdom of God established here on earth and in our lives. So I want the listener to engage with the lyrics more than anything. We didn't want to just record another album for the sake of it, so everything had to have a reason for being on the album."

Explore: All of the band's albums are available on Spotify.

MOVIES

Movie: 42

Genre: Drama

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: In 1946, Brooklyn Dodgers GM Branch Rickey changed the face of sports by signing Jackie Robinson. The movie explores how this heroic act created a wide range of problems for both men.

Our Take: Robinson affected so much more than baseball. Any sports-loving teenager will get a lot out of this story of overcoming prejudice and breaking barriers.

Movie: *Evil Dead*

Genre: Horror

Rating: R

Synopsis: In this reboot of the '80s horror series, five friends at a remote cabin find the *Necronomicon*, the Book of the Dead. Then they summon demons who possess them one by one...with grisly results.

Our Take: This franchise morphed into a campy, tongue-in-cheek series, but the reboot takes it back to a pure horror film. Because of the extreme gore and occult undertones, teenagers should definitely steer clear of this movie.

VIDEO GAMES



Injustice: Gods Among Us—This fighting game features a huge cast of superheroes from the DC universe, including Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Lex Luthor, and Green Arrow. The "T" rating means this game shouldn't have the extreme gore of fighting games such as *Mortal Kombat* or the overt sexuality of the "Dead or Alive" fighting series. (Rated T; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii U)

Bioshock: Infinite—This third game in the critically acclaimed series moves away from commenting on Ayn Rand Objectivism and dystopia toward commenting on the idea of American exceptionalism and class warfare. What won't be different is the foul language and bloody gameplay in this first-person shooter. (Rated M; Xbox 360, PS3, PC)

APRIL 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Church Office closed for Easter Monday Holiday 6:00 pm High School Small Group					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Mass & Sunday School 2:00 Post-Confirmation attend Martin Luther School Party	6:00 pm High School Small Group 7:15-8:30 pm Confirmation Class					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:30 & 11:00 Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 12:30-2:00pm Post-Conf. Youth Group	6:00 pm High School Small Group 7:15-8:30 pm Confirmation Class					
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:30 & 11:00 Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 12:30-2:00 pm Post Conf. Youth Group	6:00 pm High School Small Group 7:15-8:30 pm Confirmation Class					10:00 am Confirmation & Post-Confirmation Service — Muhlenberg House Spring CleanUp
28	29	30				
8:30 & 11:00 Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 12:30-2:00 pm Post Conf. Youth Group	6:00 pm High School Small Group 7:15-8:30 pm Confirmation Youth Group @ the Fire Pit (weather permitting)					