

Because We're All Forever Earthbound

Discussion Study Guide

Moderator Memo

- The introductions of each chapter suggest that the reader is on a sequentially progressive literary journey. However, the chapters (or any individual essay) need not be read sequentially. Indeed, we'd suggest you pick the topic(s) that are of most interest to read and discuss first.
- A Biblical reference is suggested for each section. If the moderator would like to include other Scripture references, this link may be helpful.
<https://earthministry.org/worship/scripture/>
- The format suggested here is just that, a suggestion. Please modify to suit your situation.

GENERAL DISCUSSION FORMAT

- A. Introduction
 1. Name exchange
 2. Biblical reference (optional)
 3. Theme-focusing fact or quote
- B. Central question(s)
- C. Christian Response (optional)
- D. The Take-Away
 1. Individual take-ways
 2. Housekeeping – next meeting details, readings etc.
 3. Closing prayer (optional)

We hope you find this book and guide useful and Thank You for your partnership in building a livable world.

We'd enjoy hearing from you. Contact the author at:
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AT HOME

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and tell one detail about your home that makes it a comfortable and inviting environment.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference -
Leviticus 19:9-10; Philippians 2:1-4 (Optional)
3. Leader reminds group of Sallie McFague's Ecological Model that suggests three basic "house rules":
 - a.) Take only your share.
 - b.) Clean up after yourself.
 - c.) Keep the house in good repair for future occupants.

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

How does living in America in the 21st century make it difficult to follow these three house rules?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional)

How do these house rules correspond to the Golden Rule?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually share a question, action, or response you'll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping – next meeting details, readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

CLIMATE CHANGES

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and tell one change you've noticed in the climate compared to years past.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **Psalm 46:1-7 (8-11)** (Optional)
3. Leader – Go to: **www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-atmospheric-carbon-dioxide**
Find an interesting “not-so-fun” fact or two about current CO2 levels, current global temps., or similar piece of information.

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

There are frightening and perhaps overwhelming aspects associated with climate change. Where can we find genuine avenues of hope to pull us through toward a promising future?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional)

How can Christians activate their own or other communities of faith to positively respond to this challenge?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually share a question, action, or response you'll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping – next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

POLLUTION

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and give an example of a type of pollution that is most troubling, challenging or yucky to you personally.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **Ezekiel 34:17-22** (Optional)
3. Facilitator – Read this quote from Earth Day founder, Gaylord Nelson. "The wealth of the nation is its air, water, soil, forests, minerals, rivers, lakes, oceans, scenic beauty, wildlife habitats and biodiversity... that's all there is. That's the whole economy. That's where all the economic activity and jobs come from. These biological systems are the sustaining wealth of the world."

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

People who are trying to be responsible strive to practice the “4-Rs”, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, and Recycle. Is doing that sufficient to maintain a sustainable ecosystem? If not, what other steps or model is needed?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional)

Responsible Christians recognize a tension between industrial / economic development and the pollution it almost inevitably creates. How can this tension best be addressed?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually share a question, action, or response you'll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping - next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

BALANCE

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and give an example of what you do to get “re-centered” when feeling out of whack. E.g. a meditative practice, warm beverage, a dose of the outdoors etc.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **Psalm 146** (Optional)
3. In Joel Salatin’s book, “**Folks, This Ain’t Normal,**” the author suggests that never before has humankind been so separated from its sources of food, structural materials, and energy. As a result, many people no longer have a visceral connection with these basic human resources. This colors our relationship with the natural world making it difficult to maintain a balanced, honest relationship with it.

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

Generally speaking, Americans are at the top of the consumer pyramid. As such, do we have some obligation to work toward a more balanced distribution of consumer goods? If not, why not? If so, what are some effective ways to do so?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional)

Jesus elevated the most marginalized members of society. Do Christians do adequate job to elevate marginalized people in the modern world? If not, what unique role can faith communities play in this endeavor?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually, share a question, action, or response you’ll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping - next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

FUEL UP

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and tell what fuel source heated your home when you were a toddler.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **1 Corinthians 3:10-17** (Optional)
3. Leader shares – Governor Evers executive order #38 creates the state’s Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy, and directs the new office to “achieve a goal of ensuring all electricity consumed within the State of Wisconsin is 100 percent carbon-free by 2050.”

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

What habits, practices, assumptions, and economic realities will make it challenging for Wisconsin to achieve Gov. Evers’ goal? What are the best ways to overcome these challenges?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional)

Faith communities are usually housed in and responsible for a physical structure i.e. church, meeting house, synagogue, temple etc. What are some effective ways to make sure those structures are using fuel sources responsibly?

D. TAKE-AWAY

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UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and share something you might say or do to calm a child (or yourself) during a storm.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **Jeremiah 29:11-14** (Optional)
3. Leader shares this Sept. '19 quote from this [Electrek](#), “2019 has *not* been a good weather year — and that’s an understatement. It could be one of the most disastrous in 20 years before we move into 2020. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center in Geneva, extreme weather events displaced a record 7 million people globally during the first six months of this year.”

B. CENTRAL QUESTION

We humans can be fiercely loyal to both preconceived ideas and biases as well as to our “tribe,” blinding us to unforeseen circumstances that may be in conflict with our own self-interests. How can we more objectively examine our own biases concerning environmental issues? How can we help others do the same?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional)

How should faith-based groups respond to the growing number of climate-displaced individuals?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually, share a question, action, or response you’ll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping - next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

CHOICES MATTER

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group and share a practice you’ve voluntarily undertaken as a good steward of the Earth.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference **Genesis 2:8-9, 15** (Optional)
3. Leader reminds all of the 4 suggestions given in the “Deprivation Delusion” essay.
 - Buy a high mileage car, drive it with a light touch (no hard acceleration or braking), keep your speed down, and own it (and everything else) until it turns to dust.
 - Limit flying. (Although depending on circumstances, it may be better than driving solo for long distances.) Fly coach and try to book nonstop flights.
 - Turn the heat down a bit and raise the AC.
 - Eat low on the food chain, (i.e., more like a vegetarian.) Even lowering meat consumption by just 1–2 meals a week makes a difference.

B. CENTRAL QUESTION – It’s often quite difficult to make the most “stewardship-friendly” choice. And when we don’t, we may feel guilty of not doing our part. How can we make it easier to make those “stewardship-friendly” choices in our own lives? How can we make it easier for our communities or the greater society to do the same?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional) – Over and over again, Jesus demonstrates how the Kingdom of God is revealed through a life of simplicity and service to others. In contrast, we’re bombarded by commercialism and advertising that lure us down a more selfish, consumptive path. Share time you’ve experienced satisfaction and tranquility through simplicity and service over consumption.

D. TAKE-AWAY

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2. Housekeeping - next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

A BRIGHT FUTURE

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group, and in just a sentence or two relate a time you engaged with someone who likely considers him or herself marginalized in today's society.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **Zechariah 7:8-10** (Optional)
3. From 350.org, leader shares, "The challenge we face is bigger than replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources of energy. **The solutions we need have to put people's well-being at the center and challenge the status quo of our growth-driven economy and short-term thinking.**

That includes letting go of the assumption that our well-being will deteriorate if we use less energy or our economy shrinks. The rapid transition to renewable energy has been led from the bottom-up by local communities taking control over their own power. Community-based initiatives that break with business as usual show a sustainable and just path forward."

B. CENTRAL QUESTION – Entrenched economic and political interests are reluctant to let go of the systems and models that have enabled them to control wealth and power. Arguably, to maintain an ecologically stable environment, society needs to transition quickly away from many of those systems and models. What are effective ways to do so?

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional) – Jesus embraced those who were marginalized by society. In following that model, how can we insure that today's marginalized groups receive top consideration as we develop the new systems and models for a secure, balanced future?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually, share a question, action, or response you'll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping - next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)

THE LAST WORD

A. INTRO

1. Share your name with the group, and briefly mention a time you've enjoyed or marveled at some untamed animal.
2. Leader shares this biblical reference - **Job 12:7-10** (Optional)
3. Leader shares: The *Anthropocene* defines Earth's most recent geologic time period as being human-influenced, or anthropogenic, based on overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes are now altered by humans.

B. CENTRAL QUESTION – Many of this section's stories are told from an animal's point of view. If we hope to preserve an environmentally healthy planet, what kind of relationship with the animal kingdom should we strive for? Consider both domestic and "wild" animal populations.

C. CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (Optional) - Genesis 1:26 states, "And God said, Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." The author wrote this passage from a much different historical and cultural context than we find ourselves today. For an ecologically balanced and sustainable environment, how should we understand the meaning of "having dominion" over the Earth's creatures?

D. TAKE-AWAY

1. Individually, share a question, action, or response you'll carry into the coming week.
2. Housekeeping - next meeting, suggested readings etc.
3. Closing prayer (if appropriate)