

## “Facing the Future”

Romans 8:20-22

One of my favorite things to do in the summertime is go to the county fair. I love the smell of cotton candy, the sound of laughter, and the music that is swirling through the corridors of flashing lights and seemingly unstable rides. One of the last things I do almost every year before I leave is walk through the funhouse. Unfortunately, the funhouse isn't as “fun” as it was when I was 7, but, hey, it's tradition.

If you have ever been in a funhouse, you know they are famous for their mirrors. Funhouse mirrors are rippled and shaped in such a way that they might seemingly make your head look big, your belly bloated, or your body razor thin. They make your body look distorted, twisted, and unnatural.

The state of our world is a lot like that. What once was a beautiful and perfect place is now a deteriorated place of decay and waste. The author of Romans actually describes it as “groaning.” “For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it—in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now” (Romans 8:20-22).

Part of the reason that our world is so out of whack is because creation fell when Adam ate of the fruit and sinned entered into the world (Genesis 3:17-19). But, another reason is because of the sins that we commit today when we ignore our job as stewards (Genesis 2:15) and fail to preserve the Earth that God called “good” (Genesis 1). Here are just a few examples:

- Air pollution now affects more than one in three Americans. As a result, cancer rates are rising and asthma and lung damage is increasing, especially among children.
- More than 1 billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water. Of these, 3 million will die this year from preventable, water-related diseases.
- Nearly one-third of the world's fisheries have collapsed or are near collapse due to overfishing. More than 250 million people worldwide become sick each year due to eating contaminated fish or swimming/bathing in contaminated water.
- Two-thirds of America's estuaries and bays are either moderately or severely degraded by pollution.
- Approximately 10 percent of all coral reefs worldwide are degraded beyond recovery.
- The world's rainforest have been reduced from approximately 14 percent of the Earth's surface area to about 6 percent.
- Americans now produce more than 4.5 pounds of trash per day, per person. Most of this will end up in a landfill to be slowly degraded over decades or centuries.
- At least 15,589 species worldwide face extinction. Current extinction rates are more than 100 times normal rates by the most conservative estimates.<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 19 tells us that God's creation is here to declare His glory. And, 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “whatever you do, do everything for God's glory.” So ask yourself, do these things bring God glory? Does the irreversible destruction of God's Earth glorify Him? Does the ravenous consumption and irresponsible waste of mankind align with His view of a good Earth protected and preserved by us as worshipful stewards? The answer is undoubtedly “no.”

What is worse is that these things now receive massive media coverage and international political attention. The world is wondering what should be done about these environmental crises that affect so many. Is this not a perfect opportunity to be on mission for God?

Think about your college campus or the community where you live? How can you show the love of God and live up to your calling as a steward of this planet in places where you frequent? It could be that a community cleanup project in a local park or a campus-wide recycling initiative, or simply writing your local governmental representative to suggest more responsible civic policies would send a loud message about Who you serve and how that changes the way you live. Remember that caring for creation is not just good theology. It's good neighboring, good living, and a great way to be on mission for God.

## Talk It Up:

1. Where do you see the distortions and destruction of creation in your community?
2. Romans 8 talks about Christ's work to restore creation to its original state. Can we be a part of that task? How?
3. Read Psalm 19 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Where do you feel that you fall short in bringing glory to God through your environmental witness?
4. What are some things that you can begin doing even this week to be a better neighbor and more effective witness for Christ through caring for God's creation?
5. How have your actions, words, or thoughts this week affirmed the "whole purpose of God" in your life? (Acts 20:27)
6. How has your mindset and/or actions reflected God's missional purpose for you this week? (Acts 20:29)
7. How has God's Word built you up this week? (Acts 20:32)

## Prayer Requests:

- Ask for God to help mankind reverse the devastating trends in creation care around the planet.
- Ask God to show you and your local church what part He wants you to play in caring for His creation.
- Ask God to open the hearts of specific people in your life who need a relationship with Jesus.
- Pray for God to start a spiritual awakening on your campus and on college campuses across the country and around the world.
- Take time to pray for any personal requests that group members may have.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics courtesy of [www.creationcare.org/resources/sunday/facts.php](http://www.creationcare.org/resources/sunday/facts.php)