



# **Whose World is it Anyway?**

**How to be a Green Christian**

**“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”**

(Psalm 24, verse 1)

**“And God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.”** (Genesis 1, verse 31)

Christians believe the whole universe, including Earth, was created by God. If God is the Creator, then He has ideas about how Creation should be looked after. We find God’s instructions scattered throughout the Bible. They are not restrictive – on the contrary, when followed properly, they create a balance to life, which is energising, loving and compassionate.

God created people in His own image (Genesis 1, vv27-28). An image is a reflection or likeness of someone; in some special way people are like God. We are to rule over the earth, to be His deputies, or stewards, or caretakers; we are to rule as Jesus Himself would rule. The Bible talks about “**dominion**”, or lordship, not “**domination**”. Human beings have not always got this right.

***Dominion is creative and constructive, domination is destructive.***

Genesis speaks of the partnership between God and Adam, and also of the destruction of that partnership, and its consequences. We see those consequences today – spiritual emptiness, disobedience, sin. But for Christians, that partnership with God has been restored in Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, Godly kingship and lordship are always linked with servanthood. Jesus described himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. He “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20 v 28). For Christians, it is right that we should be concerned with “Green” issues, because God is intimately concerned with His creation, He has delegated His authority to people for a while, and He continues to take an interest in the world.

In Leviticus 25, God reminds Israel that the land is His, and that they are merely tenants of it. Have things changed so much? No, it is still true that:

*“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it.”*

Scientists and environmentalists all over the world agree that our planet is in crisis. The root problem is over-consumption; energy, food, clothing, furniture, knick-knacks, toys, gadgets, water... The rich West (and we *are* rich) - 20% of the world's population - consumes over 80% of the world's resources. It would take at least three Planet Earths to bring the rest of the world's living standards up to our own. This is not sustainable. Neither are we "loving our neighbour as ourselves".

Because of Christians' unique perspective, we should be at the forefront of a new way of looking at life, not merely following on. Being Green and being Christian are deeply compatible!

## Tips and Hints

***Where there is an asterisk\*\*, this activity saves you money.***

*Many people believe that being green is expensive – not true! A properly green lifestyle is cheaper than a conventional one; you will generally save money. Very often, something that is expensive initially is less expensive in the long term, as well as causing less strain both now and in the future on an increasingly fragile world.*

## Water

*Let's use water wisely. We are used to plenty of water, but this will change as the climate gets hotter and our rainfall less reliable. We will likely have too little rain at times, or too much, which the land cannot absorb, thus causing flooding. Water demands are increasing as people use more. Per person, there is less water available in the South-East of England than in Greece. It's been predicted that future wars will be fought over water.*

- Install a water butt (subsidised from the Council) for the garden.
- Install a water meter (free from water companies).\*\*
- A shower (not power shower) – uses 1/3 of the water of a bath.\*\*
- Use your washing machine and dishwasher wisely. Don't do half-loads. Use the lowest possible temperature.\*\*

- Do your clothes really need washing? \*\* Sponge clean or brush down where possible.
- Use a bucket (pay a teenager?) rather than a carwash. \*\*
- Don't leave the tap running whilst brushing teeth, washing hands, washing up etc. \*\*
- Use a watering can, not a sprinkler, on the garden. Your lawn will survive! A hose uses as much water in a couple of hours as a family of four in two days. \*\*

## **Shopping**

*This is a huge area of consumption. The golden rule is to ask yourself if you really need something, or if it's just an impulse buy, or just for a change.*

- Wear things out before you replace them. \*\*
- Buy second-hand \*\*. Furniture is often a good buy. Look in the local papers. Buy at charity shops. \*\*
- Don't buy new just for the sake of it. \*\*
- Do our children really need as many things as they think they do?! \*\*
- Buy fairly traded goods from charities such as Oxfam, Traidcraft, The Leprosy Mission. This helps severely impoverished people overseas.
- Buy locally produced goods if you can. Check where things have come from – how many “food miles” (therefore fuel) have they clocked up?
- Christmas – how much do we spend? How glorifying is over-consumption to the Christ-child? Some people set a limit on how much they spend per head (e.g. £5 or £10), and give the excess to charity. Likewise birthday presents. \*\*
- Avoid mahogany, teak, and other tropical hardwoods. They are not sustainably forested. \*\*
- Use the library, rather than buying books. \*\*
- Borrow DIY or gardening equipment, rather than buying. \*\*

- Buy “natural” fabrics and materials (e.g. cotton, wood) rather than “artificial” (acrylic, plastic etc), which are by-products of the petrochemical industry. Natural is less polluting to manufacture and dispose of. Micro-plastics (often fibres from clothing), have been found everywhere on the planet, including oceans, mountains and the Antarctic.
- Having said that, cotton uses more pesticides than any other crop on the planet. Try and buy organic cotton if possible.

## Energy

*The watchword for energy is “use less.” We are heavily dependent on carbon fuels – coal, gas, petrol – to provide for our energy needs, and our consumption is going up. It’s been predicted that by 2050 we will use 50% more energy than we do now. The burning of oil causes carbon emissions, which cause global planetary heating.*

- Use the least energy you can, in every area of life.\*\*
- When replacing an appliance, buy the most energy-efficient you can afford.\*\* <https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk>
- Use LED lights, which save massive amounts of energy and money. Get rid of old incandescent light bulbs, but use up fluorescent bulbs. Don’t buy new fluorescent bulbs – the mercury in them is difficult to dispose of – take to recycling centre. \*\*
- Switch off gadgets, lights, machines at the wall when not in use – broadband, TV, radio (listen to it hum even when switched off!).\*\*
- Insulate your home.\*\*
- Use reflective foil behind radiators.\*\*
- Close curtains at dusk. \*\* Hang heavy curtains over draughty windows.\*\*
- Better still, block up those draughts. Most energy loss at home is not through the roof, but because of draughts.\*\*
- Use lower energy for cooking: slow cooker/pressure cooker.\*\*
- Turn down your heating, wear more clothes (including thermal undies).\*\*
- Don’t heat your home at night. Use hot water bottles.\*\*

- Use the washing line to dry clothes; save the tumble drier for emergencies only (it EATS energy!).\*\*
- Patio heaters are very wasteful of energy, as are gas fires.\*\*
- Fit double glazing if possible.
- Fit solar panels for hot water/electricity if possible.

## The home

*Again, “less is more”. Try not to introduce chemicals into your home. Individual chemicals may be hazardous (some induce asthma, eczema, or even depression – some are implicated in cancer) – but more dangerous is the “cocktail effect”. We don’t know the ultimate risks of exposure to thousands of different chemicals. Many cleaning products end up in waterways and affect aquatic life. Use low-risk alternatives.*

- Air fresheners don’t “freshen” the air – they add chemicals to it. Open the window instead.\*\*
- Use ecologically sensitive cleaning products (Ecover, Clear Spring, Bio-D, etc), made of 100% natural ingredients which biodegrade safely in days. Alternatively, use old-fashioned ideas – vinegar, washing soda, beeswax.\*\*
- Avoid aerosols. These contain dangerous gases.\*\*
- Don’t put bubbles in the bath.\*\* Bubbles carry on foaming almost indefinitely in our waterways.
- Beauty products often come with a price. Think of the “cocktail effect”. Many commercial perfumes are artificial. Try essential oils, natural soaps, and shampoos. Some people make their own! Look online for ideas.
- If you like fizzy drinks, a soda stream is a greener option!\*\*
- Buy genuine recycled paper products – don’t be misled by “this paper comes from sustainable plantations”. Many natural forests have been replaced by monoculture plantations supporting little wildlife.

## **Food**

*Many believe that without GM crops and intensive monocultures, using artificial fertilisers and pesticides, the world's population cannot be fed. This is not true. Properly managed mixed organic agriculture gives high yields; the key is the quality of the soil, built up to provide long-term fertility, rather than a short-term chemical fix. Per acre, small mixed traditional farms have a far higher yield than large monocultures.*

*Problems associated with GM include the copyright of GM foods owned by the company that created them. Farmers pay fees to use the seed, are not allowed to use any other, and have to buy the company's own fertilisers. Some farmers have been prosecuted by huge agribusinesses because of cross-contamination from neighbouring land.*

*Problems of pesticides and herbicides include devastating loss of wildlife, destruction of ecosystems, and death of soil, all essential for life on planet Earth. Agrichemicals also affect water and aquatic wildlife.*

- Grow food – tomatoes, beans, courgettes in pots or grow bags, herbs on a windowsill, beans sprouted in a large jam jar...\*\*
- How many convenience foods do you buy? Make more of your own – better for your purse, environment, and your health.\*\*
- Eat less meat. Many farm animals are fed on grain from poor countries overseas, where people are literally starving.\*\*
- Take a packed lunch to work, rather than relying on factory-produced plastic-covered sandwiches.\*\*
- Encourage children to eat what adults eat, not “children’s food”.\*\*
- Support farmers’ markets, local shops, and locally produced food. Often vegetables and fruits are much cheaper. Leigh Court Farm is a local organic grower: <https://leighcourtfarm.org.uk/>
- Buy fairly-traded foods: coffee, tea, sugar, bananas, chocolate, pineapple, rice, pasta, and more, which guarantee fair working conditions and pay, and no slavery or human trafficking.
- Consider LOAF meals, at home and at church: Local, Organic, Animal-Friendly, Fairtrade. Even one of these principles makes a difference.

## **Gardening and Wildlife**

*We are totally dependent on the natural world. Einstein calculated that if all the bees in the world disappeared, humankind would have just 4 years to live. Bees, lacewings, hoverflies, and others pollinate the majority of our crops, around 130 fruits and vegetables. No insects = no pollination. No pollination = no seeds = no plants = no food. Insecticides do not discriminate between beneficial insects and pests.*

- Garden organically. Borrow library books, and share ideas with other gardeners.\*\*
- Encourage wildlife in your garden. Frogs, toads and hedgehogs all eat pests. Beneficial insects will enjoy your garden.\*\*
- Compost! Get a subsidised bin from the council. Don't burn autumn leaves – compost instead. Borrow a shredder and compost twigs and prunings.\*\*
- Compost raw vegetable and fruit peelings, and shredded paper. Use the council food waste collection for bones, eggshells, cooked food waste. This waste is turned into compost.
- Recycle your Christmas tree. It will become garden mulch.
- Grow some food.\*\*
- Feed the birds.
- Find out about the local wildlife. Go for nature walks. Support Avon Wildlife Trust. <https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/>
- Support an environmental organisation. Campaign for the protection of forests, which provide oxygen, regulate rainfall, and stabilise climate.

## **Transport**

*Most of us use the car too much. Use it less – offer or ask for lifts; save up jobs in town for one trip; walk, cycle, or use public transport. Do you have more than one car in your household, and do you really need them?\*\*\**

*Flying is growing fast, despite the climate crisis. Around 90% of flights are for leisure, not business. About the same proportion are taken by a mere 5% of the world's population, including UK.*

- The single most important thing anyone can do about their contribution to the climate crisis is to stop flying for leisure. **This far outweighs any other action.** Flights are also highly polluting, in fuel and single-use plastics.
- Long distance trains are possible over all of Europe. [www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com)
- Many climate scientists have pledged never to fly again. Perhaps we can do the same. <https://www.flightfree.co.uk/pledge>
- If you sometimes need a second car in your family, join a car club. <https://www.co-wheels.org.uk/> <https://www-eu.zipcar.co.uk>

## **Rubbish and Recycling**

*There is a rubbish crisis. Our UK landfill sites are almost full. The biggest landfill site in the world is in Greece and can be seen from space. Our recycling has in recent years been sent to other countries such as China and Malaysia, which can no longer deal with it. Much recycling ends up in landfill. Yet again, the answer is to use less in the first place.*

- The best way to recycle is to **RE-USE** something. There is no “away”. And **REPAIR** broken things.
- Give things you no longer need to charity, or sell. Put things outside your house for others to collect. Give good quality clothing and household items to refugee centres.
- **Re-use** paper as much as possible, and then recycle it. Re-use envelopes! Re-use wrapping paper; use old cards as postcards.\*\*
- **Reduce** plastic – wrappers, bottles, single-use containers.
- Try not to use disposable nappies or wet wipes. They take decades to imperfectly rot down in landfill, leaving behind plastics. Make your own wet wipes from cloth; use a nappy washing service.\*\*
- Never put wet wipes down the loo – they don't disintegrate. Clean-up costs are very expensive.

## **And finally...**

Many of these ideas are interconnected, just like the environment. One action may have a good effect on both your water and energy consumption, or be good for both your health and wildlife. Keep thinking creatively and share your ideas with others. Let's remain aware of our brothers and sisters, human and non-human, near and far, both now and in the future, all created by the love of the Creator.

**“And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”** (Micah 6, verse 8)

**A Rocha** <https://www.arocha.org/en/> Christian organisation engaging communities in nature conservation worldwide, founded in 1983.

**Christian Aid** [www.christianaid.co.uk](http://www.christianaid.co.uk) The official relief and development agency of 41 British and Irish churches, working in 37 countries, founded in 1945.

**Christian Climate Action** <https://christianclimateaction.org/> Prayerful action and public witness, as a way of following Jesus Christ in the face of climate breakdown, founded in 2014.

**Climate Stewards** <https://www.climatestewards.org/> A charity helping people offset unavoidable carbon emissions with community forestry, water filter and cookstove projects in the developing world. *“Reduce what you can, offset the rest.”* Founded in 2010.

**Eco Church** <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk> An A Rocha UK project, enabling congregations to record their progress in caring for creation, and to plan future initiatives.

**Green Christian** <https://greenchristian.org.uk/> “*Ordinary Christians, Extraordinary Times*”: a charity helping people understand how environmental issues relate to their faith, founded in 1981.

**John Ray Initiative** <https://www.jri.org.uk/> A charity connecting environment, science and Christianity, founded in 1997.

**Joy in Enough** <https://joyinenough.org/> A campaign for a fair and sustainable economy, led by Green Christian and supported by partner organisations, founded in 2013.

**Operation Noah** <https://operationnoah.org/> A Christian charity working with the Church to inspire action on climate change. “*Faith-motivated, science-informed, hope-inspired.*” Founded in 2004.

**Tear Fund** [www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org) A Christian relief and development agency, working in around 50 countries, founded in 1968.

**Traidcraft** <https://www.traidcraft.co.uk/> The original fair trade pioneers in the UK, advocating the importance of organic farming, sustainability and transparency to growers and artisans throughout the world, established in 1979.

**Centre for Alternative Technology** <https://www.cat.org.uk/> A charity and research centre inspiring, informing and enabling people to achieve practical solutions for sustainability, founded in 1973.

**Friends of the Earth** <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/> An environmental campaigning community and charity dedicated to the wellbeing and protection of the natural world and everyone in it, founded in 1971.

**Garden Organic** <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/> The national UK charity for organic growing, providing courses, advice and seeds, founded in 1958.

**Practical Action** [www.practicalaction.org](http://www.practicalaction.org) An innovative international development organisation, working with communities to develop locally owned solutions for agriculture, water and waste management, climate resilience and clean energy, founded in 1969.

**Oxfam** [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk) A globally renowned aid and development charity, working and campaigning with partners in over 90 countries worldwide, founded in 1942.

**Sustrans** [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) A UK sustainable transport charity, based in Bristol, founded in 1977.

**Tree Aid** [www.treeaid.org.uk](http://www.treeaid.org.uk) A charity planting trees in the drylands of Africa, some of the toughest conditions on earth. Trees provide nutrition, generate income and create a healthy environment. Based in Bristol, founded in 1987.



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