

# Sample Devotional from HOME, HOPE, AND HOLIDAYS: WINTER DEVOTIONALS

## Sustainable Stewardship—Part 1

Today and tomorrow, I would like to discuss a topic that is near and dear to my heart. I'm certain you won't be surprised to learn that I am passionate about environmental stewardship. Sadly, our Christian faith has often been accused of pitting humans against the natural world, and for good reason. Many Christ followers don't believe that creation care is part of the Gospel or relevant to spiritual growth. To the contrary, our faith is inherently connected to the world in which we live. The very purpose for which we were created is to rule over creation on behalf of our Creator.

*So God created human beings in his own image.*

*In the image of God he created them;*

*male and female he created them.*

*Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."*

**Genesis 1:27–28**

As God's stewards, we are called to care for creation with compassion and utilize our resources with wisdom. We must cultivate the health and flourishing of the natural world because it is a primary element of our purpose and because our own health is tied to that of our home.

Environmental stewardship is a vital, if neglected, aspect of salvation. The well-intentioned but misguided focus on an other-worldly, disembodied heaven has distanced us from our environment and distracted us from our calling. Jesus didn't merely sacrifice himself to save us from sin, but to redeem and restore all of creation. N. T. Wright, arguably the most brilliant living Bible scholar, laments that many Christians have settled for a "truncated and distorted version" of the greatest of all biblical expectations (*Surprised By Hope*, HarperOne, 2009, p19). Salvation is not solely about rescue from death, the promise of heaven, or even a relationship with God. Salvation includes the healing of all of creation and is as broad as creation itself.

A mature faith in Christ thus involves respect for the natural world and the wonders it holds. As we grow in submission to our Lord, we should also grow more sensitive to all forms of life and increasingly recognize our interdependence. Christian environmentalism is not naive utopianism, but rather a multi-faceted response to industrial progress, developing technology, and personal choice. As followers of Christ, we are called to be agents of redemption by caring for our world and bearing the Good News of Christ's love to those who live in it.



*Heavenly Father, thank you for the beautiful environment you created for your children. I'm honored you have entrusted me with caring for the natural world. Forgive me for taking lightly my responsibility in regard to the environment. Give me the wisdom and self-discipline to steward your creation well. Teach me to appreciate the fullness of the Gospel and embody the fullness of Christ's redemptive work. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### **Personal Reflection**

Reflect on your own attitude toward the natural world. Is environmental stewardship a new concept for you? Do you feel empowered or frustrated by God's call to care for creation? How can you more fully promote the redemptive work of Christ in your environment and among your peers? Write down your thoughts so you can reference them tomorrow.



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## Sustainable Stewardship—Part 2

In the 2013 film *Snowpiercer*, a catastrophic attempt to reverse global warming triggers an ice age that wipes out nearly all life on earth. The only survivors consist of a lucky few who board a perpetual-motion train that serves as a futuristic Noah's Ark. The remnant struggles to survive as confined spaces and limited resources draw the worst impulses of humanity to the surface. Even *Snowpiercer's* train, the pinnacle of human innovation, eventually derails under the weight of human folly.

Although a secular film, the movie highlights the sin nature that leads humans to abuse creation and mistreat each other. We continue to strive for more and hoard our resources even though most of us don't worry over having enough to survive. We prioritize our own wants, often regardless of the impact on fellow creatures and the natural world. While God's creation has the capacity to sustain all life, the earth was not intended to sustain the kind of excess in which we consistently indulge.

Fortunately, when humans reflect the image of God by caring for fellow creatures and the land, the natural resources of the world will flourish and God's plan of redemption will reach its fullest expression. The author of Proverbs has much to say about environmental stewardship. He admonishes:

*Know well the condition of your flocks,  
And pay attention to your herds;  
For riches are not forever,  
Nor does a crown endure to all generations.  
When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen,  
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,  
The lambs will be for your clothing,  
And the goats will bring the price of a field,  
And there will be goats' milk enough for your food,  
For the food of your household,  
And sustenance for your maidens.*

**Proverbs 27:23–27**

We reflect the image of God and fulfill our calling when we move all of creation towards its fullest potential. Our stewardship should reflect God's dominion in a relationship of symbiotic care more so than an economy of use. As we discussed yesterday, Christian environmentalism is not naive utopianism or an attempt to hamper technological progress. Instead, wise stewardship consists of a multi-faceted response to industrial progress, developing technology, and personal choice.



Unfortunately, I can't tell you what to do or how to do it. In our global economy, discerning which actions will have a positive impact and which will bear unseen consequences is nearly impossible. I will, however, share a few guiding principles and personal choices of my own. First, I seek to bring order and purpose to my home terrain. By making the environment around me beautiful, I hope to foster appreciation for God's handiwork. By growing my own vegetables and using a bare minimum of pesticide, I hope to foster health in my family and my living space. Second, I produce as little waste as possible and reuse as much as possible. So many of the items we routinely discard can be repurposed. While the efficacy of traditional recycling is debatable, repurposing directly reduces waste and saves money at the same time! Third, I seek to buy products that are sustainable, at least to the best of my knowledge. Sustainably sourced goods and foods typically cost more, but making sacrifices so that I can afford them is one aspect of my stewardship. Finally, I strive to be kind to all creatures—human, animal, and otherwise. Proverbs 12:10a says “A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal,” and I am happy to oblige.

Even if you don't change the world, you can make a few positive changes in your own life. Moreover, if we all share the responsibility of wise stewardship, our simple efforts can yield massive change.

*Heavenly Father, Thank you for creating an environment that sustains your children. Forgive me for putting my own selfish desires ahead of the good of the natural world and my fellow humans. Give me the self-discipline to make sacrifices that honor you and your creation. Help me to set an example of caring stewardship and selfless decisions. Grow my capacity for wisdom and discernment in the midst of confusing options and ambiguous outcomes. Empower me to do my best and entrust you with the results. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## **Personal Reflection**

Once again reflect on your own attitude toward stewardship of the natural world. Review your notes from yesterday and prayerfully consider strategies for better creation care.

Decide what change(s) you are going to make and begin to implement them today!

