

Christianity and environmental issues 3

Practical action

We've looked at some of the Biblical and practical reasons why Christians should be concerned about environmental issues, and are now going to conclude by asking what we can do.

Firstly, remembering that God cares about every aspect of life, these matters have a rightful place in our individual and corporate *spiritual* lives and should feature in our

Preaching

Concern for the world in which we live is one expression of our love for God and for other people, so the need to treat that world responsibly should be included in our preaching and teaching.

Praying

God cares for the world he has created, so we can talk to him about it and pray against the sin which spoils it.

Repentance

We should seek God's forgiveness for our selfishness, greed, arrogance and negligence which contribute to the spoiling of his good creation.

Worship

God for all his amazing creation – Psalm 104 could inspire us in this.

Thanksgiving

to God for all the good things that he has provided for us in the world (see 1 Tim 4:4).

Obedience

People care about the environment for various reasons, but as Christians a desire to live according to God's instructions and to please him should underlie all other motivation. The Old Testament laws concerning the treatment of the land and animals cannot always be transferred directly into our very different 21st century situation, but the principles can be, and we should seek to apply them to today's world.

Love

As those created in God's image we should share in his love for his creation and express that practically, especially to the poor and disadvantaged for whom God has particular concern and who are often worst affected by environmental problems.

So, what can this mean in *practical* terms?

- We should take seriously God's command to be good stewards of what he has given us.
- We should be an example to others in the way we behave.
- We should be careful. A lot of damage is done by human carelessness, and although much of that is on a corporate scale, some arises from individual thoughtlessness, for example in how we dispose of waste material.
- We are not to be sucked into the consumerist, materialistic, greedy attitude of the world, but are to be content with what we have; live as simply as possible; not waste resources.
- We could all probably benefit from examining our lifestyles. Plenty is said about this in secular sources, but some examples to think about might be:
 - Do we use the car when we could easily walk?
 - Do we waste water, fuel, food, paper?
 - Do we throw things away because we want something more up to date when what we have is perfectly serviceable?
 - Do we recycle waste and use recycled products when possible?
 - Do we buy environmentally friendly, organic and cruelty-free products when possible? They can be more expensive, but ethical behaviour might involve sacrifice.
 - Do we ask questions about how our money is used if we save or invest?

In all this we need to focus on long-term benefits rather than short-term convenience. Things will not change overnight and we need commitment, perseverance and faith. Some fruit of our actions will only appear in future generations – for good or ill.

Sue Rugg February 2007