
Our Earthly Stewardship

This lesson is based on the talk [“Our Earthly Stewardship”](#) by Bishop Gérald Caussé given in the October 2022 General Conference.

Introduction:

If time permits, you may want to show [clips from the talk](#).

Earth is a marvelous gift God has given us to both “please the eye and gladden the heart” (D&C 59:18). In scripture and in church history, many profound spiritual experiences have taken place in nature (Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove (JS-H), Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3), Jesus fasting in the wilderness (Luke 4)).

Quote: *“The emotions we feel kindle within us a deep sense of gratitude for our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who created this magnificent earth.”*

The Earth is a home that was uniquely designed to provide us the resources we need to live abundantly. Scripture tells us there is “enough and to spare” (D&C 104:17) *if* we use these resources “with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.” (D&C 59:20). Caring for the Earth is a sacred responsibility and is an “integral component of our discipleship”.

Quote: *“The divine gift of creation does not come without duties and responsibilities. These duties are best described by the concept of stewardship.”*

Discussion: What does stewardship mean to you? How is this different from ownership?

(If needed, share this quote from Bishop Caussé: *“Stewardship designates a sacred spiritual or temporal responsibility to take care of something that belongs to God for which we are accountable.”*)

Bishop Caussé shared three principles which can guide our stewardship and caretaking of this earthly sphere:

1. The entire earth, including all life thereon, belongs to God.

Discussion: How does knowing that all life belongs to God—even plants, animals, and other creatures—change your relationship with them?

2. As stewards of God’s creations, we have a duty to honor and care for them.

Quote: *“Our Heavenly Father allows us to use earthly resources according to our own free will. Yet our agency should not be interpreted as license to use or consume the riches of this world without wisdom or restraint.”*

Discussion: How does selfishness or consumerism sometimes get in the way of caring for the Earth? What effects might wastefulness have on our spirit?

Quote: *“Our stewardship over God’s creations also includes, at its pinnacle, a sacred duty to love, respect and care for all human beings with whom we share the earth...My brothers and sisters, should we not be the gardeners for our fellow men and women? Are we not our brother’s keeper? Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. From His mouth, the word neighbor does not merely mean geographic proximity; it implies a proximity of the heart. It encompasses all the inhabitants of this planet—whether they live near us or in a faraway country, regardless of their origins, personal backgrounds, or circumstances.”*

Discussion: Why is caring for the Earth an important part of caring for our neighbor?

For background information, it may be helpful to explain to your class that underserved and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards.¹²

3. We are invited to participate in the work of creation.

Quote: *We participate in the work of creation whenever we cultivate the earth or add our own constructions to this world — as long as we show respect for God’s creations. Our contributions may be expressed through the creation of works of art, architecture, music, literature, and culture, which embellish our planet, quicken our senses, and brighten our lives. We also contribute through scientific and medical discoveries that preserve the earth and life upon it.*

Discussion: How can we participate in the work of creation? How do we do it respectfully without harming what God has already created?

¹ Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States, 2021
<https://www.epa.gov/cira/population-specific-summaries>

² Report: Inequalities exacerbate climate impacts on the poor, 2016
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/report-inequalities-exacerbate-climate-impacts-on-poor/>

Conclusion:

Ask your class to reflect on spiritual experiences they have had in nature and how it has helped them better understand God. If they haven't had spiritual experiences in nature, encourage them to take a walk, watch a sunset, or step outside—whatever is feasible in your area.

Leave your class with a **challenge to each find one thing they could start or stop doing** to help them be better caretakers of earthly home (if needed for more time, you can share some of these ideas. Avoid talking about politics or politicians but focus on individual or community efforts—*"Beyond being simply a scientific or political necessity, the care of the earth and of our natural environment is a sacred responsibility entrusted to us by God."*).

Additional resources:

- [Our Earth, Our Home](#)—video produced by the Church
- [Church Newsroom article](#) about environmental stewardship and conservation
- [March 2021 Liahona](#)—contains several articles about environmental stewardship in Young Adult section
- [Talk from Bishop L. Todd Budge](#) that describes stewardship efforts from the Church
- [List of additional Church resources and articles](#) about environmental stewardship