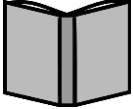









Small Group/ Reflection Notes

Session 3:		Let the land produce vegetation – Day 3
 Read	Genesis 1:9-13	 Listen again ChesterRoadBaptist.org.uk/Talks
 Discuss	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you grow things? What? Where? WHY? How does it make you feel? <input type="checkbox"/> How does modern life increasingly separate many of us from the land? Does that matter? Why? <input type="checkbox"/> Why might being better connected to the land/ Creation help our relationship with each other? God? <input type="checkbox"/> There are over 60,000 <i>different</i> species of tree in the world today. What does that say about God?	
 Go further	<input type="checkbox"/> Why are some Christians 'glass half-empty' people? Where does that come from? How does that affect what they believe and do? <input type="checkbox"/> What difference does 'original goodness' make to the way we treat the land? <input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah 24:4: How/ why today is Creation 'groaning'? What part do we play? <input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah 55:12: How might <i>our</i> actions enable Creation to give God more praise?	
 Reflect	<input type="checkbox"/> Which one verse stands out to you? Why do you think it grabs your attention? <input type="checkbox"/> Which verse(s) will you need to think more about? Why? <input type="checkbox"/> Hold some soil in your hands. What potential does it have? Thank God for the gift of the land.	
 Do	<input type="checkbox"/> On a walk, stop by a tree. Think of all the blessings the tree provides. How is it a gift from God? <input type="checkbox"/> What 'next step' could you take to eat more fruit, vegetables, seeds, pulses..? <input type="checkbox"/> What could you grow? Plant something in the land.	
 Pray	<p><i>Dear God, thank you for the gift of land. Help me to celebrate, protect, and share what You have made. Creator God, you make things grow with life and abundance. Help me to open myself up to Your ministry. May I be fertile soil for You. Plant within me a passion and vision for all that delights You. Lead me in right-relationship with You, each other, and Your Creation. Amen</i></p>	
 My question:		



If you're not yet in a small group, why not join one!

Check out: ChesterRoadBaptist.org.uk/SmallGroups

Can't see a small group that suits your availability/ interest? Why not start one!

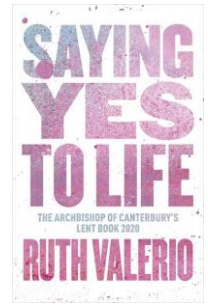
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Chester Road Baptist Church is a Registered Charity (No 1134180) and a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Background



Genesis 1:9-13: Day 3 - God said, "Let the land produce vegetation"

Trees and vegetation have a vital role to play in countering the effects of climate change: they soak up carbon dioxide, prevent soil erosion, hold back flooding...

Having called 'land into being, God said, "Let the earth grow green with grass, plant-yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit." God blessed Creation with abundance, fertility, growth, and life. A packet of seeds usually produces far more of a harvest than we need for ourselves. We then get to experience God's delight as we bless others with the fruit of our harvest.

Seven times in Genesis 1 it says, "And God saw that it was *good!*" (The seventh time it was '*very good*' – a poetic 'perfect number' way of saying completeness, in summary.)

Some 'glass half-empty' Christians talk of 'original sin' (the belief that, because Adam and Eve sinned, so therefore all who follow them are *born* sinners. We aren't 'sinners' because we 'sin'; we 'sin' because we are 'sinners'.) That is a *half-truth*, but it is not the whole truth. 'Sin' does not appear until Genesis 3 - it's not that original. The Bible begins, not with 'original *sin*' but with 'original *goodness*' - "And God saw that it was *good!*"

Creation continues to reveal God's qualities: creativity, power, joy, detail, beauty, life... Original goodness reminds us to celebrate and enjoy what God considers good. Creation and the created world is not something to escape from or renounce (as we might seek to do with sin).

'Glass half-empty' Christians sometimes create an unhelpful secular/ sacred divide, rendering the physical (created) world as 'secular' (and so, to be renounced, escaped from) and the 'sacred' being God's world in heaven. This leads some to devalue the environment (God's creation) in the misguided belief that all that matters is escaping sinful earth and 'getting to heaven'. But Jesus' radical agenda wasn't to help people escape earth for heaven, it was for His followers to bring something of heaven to earth.

We should celebrate, enjoy, and protect what God considers good. Who are we to think differently? Imagine you invest much time, care, and your heart and soul (personality) in making something. You're pleased with what you have made. It's good – very good! Imagine then someone comes along and trashed your creation. How would you feel? What would it say about them and their attitude towards you?

However urban we have become, we all rely on trees, seed-bearing plants, and vegetation. We must rediscover our connection to, and relationship with, the land. The story of God's people is about possessing the promised *land*. Our relationship with God is revealed also in our relationships with each other and with God's Creation.

Creation speaks of God's wonder and even worships its Creator (Isaiah 55:12; Romans 1:20.) Our positive actions and care for the environment can cause Creation to sing and rejoice some more.

It's not just humans that groan, all Creation groans too (Isaiah 24:4; Joel 1:10; Romans 8:19-22.) Our destructive actions can cause Creation to groan some more.

To our historic shame, colonial attitudes and actions have denied some access to their *homelands*. Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously said, "When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, 'Let us close our eyes and pray'. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land." There are *wrongs* that have yet to be put *right*.

Trees feature prominently in the Bible: the *Tree of Life* & the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*. At His birth, Jesus was presented with frankincense & myrrh, both collected by 'bleeding' and roasting the resin from trees. Neither trees grew in Israel, hence their rarity. Ultimately, Jesus, the carpenter, was crucified on a tree (nailed to His creation), the ultimate act of selfless love for all Creation. Jesus came to save trees too. He is the Lord of all creation, come to set all creation free.

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