

Season of Creation

Small group material week 2: land

1. Welcome

Welcome everybody to your group. Spend some time celebrating what is happening in your lives — both good and bad! Are there birthdays / anniversaries / special occasions that need to be remembered?

2. Discussion starter

Discuss what land means for you and your family / culture / forebears. How has your family used land?

3. Introduction

The first five books of the Bible are known as the Pentateuch. They contain teachings which encourage people to live according to God's will. We are going to explore some biblical attitudes to land in the Pentateuch and rediscover some wisdom that can be applied to land use today.

We view and use land in many different ways. Discuss why we value the different types of land listed and what responsibility we have for their care: A garden at home; a communal vegetable plot; a play park; a national park; a forest.

4. Discussion

a. Land as a divine gift

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-12. For the people of God, the Promised Land was the fulfillment of the process of salvation that began with the exodus from Egypt. In the wilderness they were given guidance as to how they should treat the land that they had been promised. Stories from the bible and current affairs reveal that this gift of God has been the subject of dispute and violence.

Discuss:

- What do you think the people of God gained from their wilderness experience?
- How might we develop relationships that respect land, people and God?

b. Resting the land

Read Leviticus 25:1-5 & 8-15. In these verses from Leviticus, we understand that God ordains that the land is given a time of rest, a 'Sabbath', a common practice in many traditional societies.

- What are the advantages of allowing land under production to rest?
- In our growth-orientated world, does the concept of Sabbath, or having limits on production, have anything to contribute to the way in which we view land today?
- What can we learn about our attitude to our work?

c. Whose land?

Leviticus informs us that land belongs to God, and we as tenants may only lease it.

- If God owns the land, and we are borrowing it from him, what difference should that make to our society and the way we use land?

5. A task

Deuteronomy 26:5-10 reads as a creed recited by the people of God in worship. As a group write a creed telling the story of (or focussing on) a piece of land, or your country, or the whole earth, expressing our Christian beliefs and responsibilities regarding land and our use of land. (*from Scottish Eco-congregations*)

6. Next week

We will be looking at the issue of 'water'. Think about why water is important and how it affects us and the wider community.