

The Leader's Guide

This Bible study is meant as an entry point into topics concerning the care of creation. It presupposes a basic shared Christian faith and a willingness to be normed by that faith and the truths revealed within Scripture.

The main goal of this class, as in the larger *Life in Creation* project is to lead Christians to delight in their place within creation and take seriously their responsibility to care for it as part of their daily Christian lives.

This *Together with All Creatures* Bible study is intended to be a first step to change the **values** of the church's culture toward caring for creation and to inspire individuals to make changes both in their church and daily lives.

Note to Instructors

Our churches are blessed with many trained educators and pastors; however, the need for discipleship and education within the church is greater than pastors and teachers can handle alone, and so we often turn to laity for help. When we do, my experience has been that we are richly rewarded with capable, enthusiastic lay leaders, many of whom enter the classroom or small group with a great deal of trepidation, fearing the questions they cannot answer and unsure of how to organize or teach a class. It is to these courageous volunteers this instructor guide is written. In putting this guide together, we attempted to make as few assumptions as possible about what you, the teacher, would know. Because of this, some of you may find there is a great deal of redundancy in some of the comments, study tips, and teacher notes. For others, however, those same comments may be the first time you have ever heard someone explain classroom practice. It is hoped that, regardless of your teaching experience, you will find the notes and tips useful.

How To Use This Leader's Guide

There are a number of notes and tools available to you as the instructor. Some are just advisory points, and some are insights we learned during the pilot testing. In order to help you, we've organized them in the following styles:

Teacher's Note: General guidance and tips to help prepare you for the study. These'll be helpful in *preparation* for class, but aren't intended to be read aloud.

Time Saver: Some parts of this study are collapsible - meaning that these 'time saving tips' can help you hit all the important points, while reducing less helpful conversations.

Head's Up! These notes usually indicate major shifts in the curriculum.

Note: These are standard footnotes.

Format of the Study

This is an eight-week study. What you will find in the following pages are all the print resources you will need in order to teach the class. For each week there are two versions of the lesson plan provided. The first is the official lesson plan designed to be a one page “at a glance” guide you can bring into class and teach from. It gives a breakdown of the major objectives for the week, the needed materials, and a timeline with a one or two sentence description of the various activities for the week. The second lesson plan is a “walkthrough.” This is a more in-depth look at the class and breaks down every activity. In this version you will also find helpful notes on how to direct discussions, as well as some sample answers. It is hoped that reading through this will provide you with an opportunity to “experience” the class before you actually teach it.

How to Prepare for Class

To prepare to teach the class we recommend first reading the entire leader’s guide. This need not be exhaustive. Your main goal is to get the “big picture,” to understand the narrative arc of the course.

Next, read the short version of *Together with All Creatures*, located in the appendix of the larger version.

Then as you read the long version, make note of any questions you have or portions that do not make sense to you.

Once you have done this, you are ready to go through the leader's guide a second time, more slowly and thoroughly. “Take” the class as you read through the guide. Watch videos when appropriate and answer questions before you read the answer suggestions. As you read through the provided answers you will notice there are many questions—especially application questions—that have a number of correct possible answers. In such cases example answers have been provided. You are encouraged to read through these and use them as aids in formulating your own answers.

If you have questions, feel free to contact us. We want this to be a positive experience for you. Below you will find instructions on how to get further help from the course designers, as well as from those who have already taught the course.

Why Small Group Discussions?

Many reading this will not think twice about the inclusion of small group discussions throughout the course, but experience has shown that there are still a lot of people in the church who find this a bit... untraditional. As noted above, this course seeks to teach more than facts; it seeks to teach values and opinions. In order to better accomplish this, the materials throughout the course seek to engage students with different learning styles. For those who are more visually oriented, there are a number of videos; for those who are comfortable learning through lecture there is a lecture video each week. There are also many people who learn best by talking things through

with others. Smaller groups create opportunities for people to engage in this style of learning. Active participation also helps in the learning process and small groups allow for greater participation, especially for those who are shy. As the weeks go on and students begin to feel more comfortable with those in their small group, they will increasingly be willing to share their own thoughts and opinions within their group. Finally, many of the questions in the class call for people to discuss how they might put what they are learning into practice. The opportunity to hear a number of answers allows students to think of possibilities not conceived on their own.

On top of all of this, small group discussions allow for significantly more assessment opportunities for you, the instructor.

The Importance of Assessment

As a teacher you are constantly assessing where the student is in relation to the goals you have set for them. In the world of church classes, this is an integral piece of education that is often ignored. There are many reasons for this. The idea of passing out exams at the end of a Sunday school class is neither practical nor desirable. And of course many of the goals at which we are aiming within the church are more about attitudes than factual knowledge and these are much harder to assess.

Hard, but not impossible, there are ways to get an indication of what is going on inside the student. This course utilizes some assessment tools to help you evaluate whether the class is effective in teaching students to delight more in their place within creation and to take more seriously their responsibility to care for it as a part of their daily Christian lives.

The bulk of these assessments will take place informally for the student; however, the instructor is encouraged to formally keep track of data gathered through observations, discussions, and even informal interviews.

There will be one formal assessment for the students. This consists of the pre- and post-class assessment forms. These forms are an attempt to track growth in the degree to which students value certain components in the class. Each student will come in with a different awareness and set of values towards issues concerning the care of creation. Our hope is that by the end of this class, all students will have increased their understanding of God's creation. Our goal is that they will value the care of God's creation more than when they began. To get a sense of whether this has happened, students will take the same assessment twice, once before the class begins, and once when it is ending. The answers to the questions themselves matter very little in this assessment. What you, and the student are looking for is a change in the answers. This will indicate growth either towards or away from the central goals of this course.

Need Help?

Making something work on paper is one thing – but bringing it to life in a useable way is another. For Together with All Creatures you're not far away from the help you need, whether it is tips and ideas for using this material or help accessing the resources.

Goals & Objectives

Goals:

- The student will demonstrate a value for God's creation.
- The student will demonstrate a commitment to the care of creation.
- The student will be able to relate a Christian rationale for the care of creation.
- The student will be able to relate the broader Christian narrative in a way that includes creation and her place within it.
- The student will be able to integrate what she has learned about God's creation within other areas of her spiritual life.

Objectives of Module:

Many of the following objectives require an instructor's assessment after the course has been completed. This is intentional. Time is an essential component in being able to assess whether these values are being internalized.

In order to adequately assess whether students have mastered the various goals, instructors will need to continue assessment in the weeks following course sessions.

- One month after the completion of class sessions the student, when asked, "In what areas of your spiritual life has the topic of creation come up or had an impact?" will be able to report specific examples from at least one of the following areas without prompting: prayer, worship, scripture reading, sharing of faith, service.
- By the final week of the class, when asked in class to relate to fellow students or to the instructor the basic Christian narrative, the student will include creation themes without being prompted to do so.
- By the final weeks of class, the student, when asked to pray (opening, closing, or in small groups), will include creation themes without being prompted to do so.
- One month after the completion of the class sessions, the student will report a commitment of time, energies, and/or financial resources towards the care of creation. This may include, but is not necessarily limited to, such activities as: recycling, financial support of an environmental cause, a change in shopping habits, involvement with a congregationally supported care of creation project, volunteer work, etc.
- One month after the completion of the class sessions, the student will report that they have actively encouraged others to become involved in an issue related to the care of creation. This may include, but is not limited to, inviting someone to join in a volunteer project related to the care of creation, encouraging someone to attend the next offering of this class, or encouraging others to make personal changes in their lifestyle in light of their relationship to creation.
- By the end of the course, the student, in a personal conversation with the instructor, will be able to articulate a Christian rationale for the care of creation including at least three of the following reasons:

- An acceptance of and rejoicing in our “creatureliness” and the gift of creation.
- As Creator, God made us and claims us, and humanity is ultimately accountable to him.
- The care of creation is humanity’s first “vocation,” and we were redeemed for this vocation.
- Because we are made in the image of God, our caring for creation reflects his own care for creation.
- God has promised to restore creation. He has begun that restoration through the work of Christ, and it will be completed upon Christ’s return on the last day. God begins his redemption of creation now through us.
- God’s continual care of creation was given specifically to the church, not just mankind (see Adam and Eve, Noah, the Israelites, etc.).
- The Creator became creation in order to restore his creation.

In addition, or as a part of this, the student will establish a clear connection between the first creation and the coming of the second creation through Christ.