

Honoring God's Creation

Study Guide



I. General Questions

What comments resonate with you? How do they relate to your faith or your life experiences?

In Ken's Doxology, we sing "Praise God all creatures here below." If animals are part of the chorus praising God, what are our obligations to animals?

Are dogs, cats, and other animals that people often consider pets different in the eyes of God than animals people often see as sources of food?

Many scientists have warned of an impending "environmental crisis" in which population growth, land, water, and energy depletion, and climate changes pose dangers for human civilization. In light of these threats, what should faithful Christians do?

II. Reflect on and Discuss the Following Comments

Fr. John Dear: "I am connecting my vegetarian lifestyle to my discipleship to Jesus and in solidarity with the poor of the world."

Rev. Frank Hoffman: "It's time we make the church the central focus on what Isaiah refers to as the peaceable kingdom, where all of the animals and the humans will live together."

Betsy Wosko: "Jesus understood that violence perpetuates violence in that one gets good at what one practices."

Rev. James Antal: "I think what Jesus teaches us is that, in witnessing, we have to do what we consider God to be calling us to do regardless of its practical implications."

William Greenway, Ph.D.: "I try to eat and to purchase clothing and other items in a way so that ... I create as much joy and happiness for all of God's creature as I can ... I can't do that perfectly, and to that degree I live in a fallen world and I live by grace."

Stephen Kaufman, M.D.: "I know what happens to animals on factory farms and I would never do to animals what they do on those farms. And therefore, I do not think that it is right for me to pay someone else to do that for me."

Milton Mills, M.D.: “The reason I decided to go into medicine was that I wanted to help people understand ... that the way we eat and live has a direct bearing on our health.”

Betsy Traben: “We have four children ... and they have obviously been vegetarian for their whole lives... They are healthy. They are rarely sick. They have never had an ear infection.”

Stephen Webb, Ph.D.: “I became a vegetarian because ... that would give an expression to my confidence in God and my belief that we worship a God of peace, a God of love, and a God who is the savior of the whole world.”

III. Bible Study Topics and Questions

1. “And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, an every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’” (Genesis 1:29-30)

Is vegetarianism a biblical ideal?

What implications does the vegetarian Garden of Eden have for us today?

2. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’” (Genesis 1:26)

Given that God then prescribed a vegetarian diet to all creatures, does “dominion” here describe responsible stewardship, or a license to exploit?

Does Adam, created in God’s image, have special responsibilities, or special privileges?

3. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox... They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.” (Isaiah 11:6-7, 9)

Does this image of perfect harmony at the end of time have implications for us today?

4. “A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.” (Proverbs 12:10)

What are our duties to God’s animals?

5. “Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.” (1 Corinthians 8:13)

How can we help make vegetarian Christians feel welcomed in our churches?

Should meat-eating Christians abstain from eating animals at church events out of respect for vegetarian Christians who believe that supporting factory farming is wrong?

6. What do you think churches should be doing to honor God’s creation, and to make this a kinder and more peaceful world?