1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Psalm 8:6 (CEV) • “You let us rule everything your hands have made. And you put all of it under our power.”

Psalm 89:9 (NLT) • “You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed waves.”

Daniel 2:38 (NLT) • “He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.”

Colossians 1:16 (NLT) • “For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.”

Psalm 103:22 (The Message) • “Bless God, all creatures, wherever you are—everything and everyone made by God. And you, O my soul, bless God!”

Isaiah 40:26 (NLT) • “Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.”

Ezekiel 34:8 (NLT) • “As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you abandoned my flock and left them to be attacked by every wild animal. And though you were my shepherds, you didn’t search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of yourselves and left the sheep to starve.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “ECOLOGY: OUR SACRED RESPONSIBILITY”

Ecology is the study of the relationship of plants and animals to their physical and biological environment. But we’re going to look at it in a much broader sense. As Christians, we believe that God created the earth and gave its management and care into the hands of Adam and Eve and their descendants. He did not give the earth to them; he merely gave its care to them. God created the earth, and it still belongs to Him. We’re just the caretakers. Looking around at what’s going on in the world today might make you question just what kind of job we’re doing.

We have a responsibility to God to take care of our world and everything in it. We can’t just hope that someone else with more interest in it will get us off the hook. Each of us is responsible for doing what we can toward a common goal. Some might be more interested in issues involving the stewardship of government, others of the environment, still others of humanity. Whatever our interest, God holds us accountable for our part.
Teens often get shortchanged in this area because they are seen as too young or too flighty to be interested in these subjects, but we don’t give them enough credit. This world is mostly overseen by adults today, but tomorrow we adults may be part of what today’s youth have to oversee. We pass the care of the world (including ourselves) into their hands. It is our responsibility to teach them to care for it properly.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “ECOLOGY: OUR SACRED RESPONSIBILITY”

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Recognize that we are all linked together on earth. What affects one of us affects us all.
2. Understand that God entrusts us with this planet and that we have a responsibility to Him for its care.
3. Develop ways to become involved in taking care of the earth and/or the creatures that inhabit it.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) enough rocks, small pebbles, or other similar natural material to give one to each student, paper, pens; prize (optional); (Activity B) basket, enough items to place in the basket to have at least one more item than you have students. The items should be, or represent, some resource; for example, a ball of tinfoil, a block of wood, an apple, a nail, paper, et cetera.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Paper hearts with the words “You have been blessed with a random act of kindness,” Friday’s section of the student lesson.

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:
1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.
4. Review the “Applying” section of their Friday lesson (if needed).

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

>> Song service
>> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist Mission for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
>> Service project reports

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively and with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Say: We walk over rocks every day, never giving them a thought. But each and every particle of this planet was created by God and given to us to care for.

Get set • Pass out one rock (or pebble or other natural material) to each student along with a piece of paper and a pen.

Go • Say: How much thought do you give to rocks? Kind of boring? Yet God made every rock, every stone, every pebble. And He made them all different, even though we don’t take the time to notice. Today
we’re going to notice. You have five minutes to write a description of your rock. When you’re done, we’re going to vote on the most interesting rock. Time students for five minutes. Stop them. Allow time to read descriptions and vote for the most interesting rock, according to its description. (Optional: You could award a prize to the Most Interesting Rock.)

Debriefing • Ask: What makes each rock special? Why do you think God didn’t just make all rocks look the same? What was His purpose? What does that tell you about God?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Say: The earth has a certain amount of many resources, and that’s it. When they are all used up, they can’t be replaced. That makes it especially important for us to use our resources in a responsible way and not to waste them.

Get set • Prepare to pass the Resource Basket (see Materials Needed section). Have the students sit in a circle. Say: As the basket passes you, take one item out. Pass the item to the right and the basket to the left. If the basket comes to you and you have an item, put it in the basket and take out a different item. Pass the item to the left and the basket to the right.

Go • As the basket moves around the circle, say: Notice that we started out with a basket full of items, and even though they are not all in the basket, they are moving in and out of the basket. As long as we all share our resources, there is enough for everyone.

Debriefing • Ask: What do you think would happen if one people group hoarded all their resources? How do you think it would affect the others? Do you think we have the right to use up all the resources we have simply because we have them? What happens when we all share our resources? In what ways do the resources with which God has entrusted us belong to us? In what ways do they not? What does God say about how we are to use the resources He’s given us?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

There is a story about a man who is walking along the beach enjoying the day. He notices ahead of him someone scooping something off the beach and tossing it into the sea. When he gets closer, he realizes that it’s a woman picking up starfish that have been stranded by the outgoing tide and throwing them into the ocean to save them. He looks around him. There are thousands of starfish on the beach.

Incredulous, he says to her, “Ma’am, what are you doing? There are thousands of starfish here. You can’t possible save them all. Don’t you realize you’ll never make a difference?”

She stoops down, picks up another starfish, tosses it into the ocean, looks him squarely in the eye, and says, “I made a difference to that one.”

We may not always be able to do a lot, but each of us can do something. God only expects us to do what we can.

Debriefing • Ask: How much do you think God holds us accountable for what we could have done but didn’t? How do we know what our responsibilities are concerning the planet, the government, or humanity?

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

What would you do if your best friend raised valuable orchids and left one with you to take
got bad, no one suspected it was atmospheric dust from the volcano. People in Vermont, and other parts of the world, died without ever knowing why.

We’re all connected on earth. What we do affects someone else, and what they do affects us. If we throw our trash in the ocean, the aquatic animals get sick, people who eat them get sick, the oceans get dirty, they contribute to acid rain—it’s a never-ending cycle. We have to realize that we are all connected and that what affects one will affect us in some way as well.

**Ask:** How do you think the people affected by the volcano could have helped one another? (Answers will vary. One true story is that a man who lived in a sheltered valley had crops that survived and he freely shared them with his starving neighbors.) **What is our responsibility to others in our world?** (We need to care about others. We need to act locally and think globally.)

**C. CONNECTING TO LIFE**

**Pose the following scenario:**

People in your city are upset because of the amount of litter dirtying the streets. They are calling for the mayor to do something to clean them up. The mayor is calling on the city council. The city council is pointing the finger at the people who live in the city and saying it is their responsibility to clean up the streets, since they are the ones who tossed litter out to mess them up in the first place. No one wants to take responsibility.

**Ask:** Whose responsibility is it to clean up the streets? (The mayor’s, ours, the city council’s, everyone’s) **David says, “You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet”** (Psalm 8:6, NKJV).

**Say:** We are all responsible. First, we are responsible for not littering in the first place. And second, we are responsible for helping to clean up the litter of others.
A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Turn to Friday’s Applying section of the student lesson. During the coming week students are asked to perform an act of kindness or beauty each day without getting caught. They are to record their missions so that they can share them next Sabbath.

Say: Since this is the season for giving, many people don’t think too much about doing nice things for others at this time of year. The hard part is carrying that feeling of kindness on into the rest of the year and not just saving it up for the holiday season. This week, I hope you will each try to take up the mission to bless others with the kindness God has shown you.

Pass out paper hearts with the words “You have been blessed with a random act of kindness.” Or have students cut out their own paper hearts and decorate them with markers. Say: Whenever you do something nice for someone this week, leave behind one of these hearts. See how many you can leave without getting caught.

At this point, help the students brainstorm a list of possible things they might do to fulfill this mission.

Debriefing • Ask: What do you think will be your favorite part of doing this mission? (I like the secrecy part of it, how I will have to be really careful that they don’t find out who is doing it. I liked making people happy even though I didn’t get the credit for it. I could be nicer to some people because they didn’t know it was me.) How will you avoid getting caught? (Answers will vary.) How will you deal with not getting credit for the nice things you will do? (It will be more fun to keep it secret. I wish I could let people know it was me.)

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is your responsibility to the world?
2. Which areas of ecology are you most interested in and why?
3. Do you think we need to be involved in every aspect of ecology? Why or why not?
4. Are there things you can be doing in your community to make the world a better place? What are they?
5. What one thing can you do to improve the lives of others right now?
6. When you think about the world as a place to care for, what parts of it come to mind?
7. How does the way we spend our money impact our world?
8. In what ways are we responsible for how we spend our time? our money?

CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Thinking about the vastness of the earth and all the problems—littering, pollution, corrupt government, warring nations, endangered environments, endangered animals, natural disasters, and communities in third world countries—can make us feel that nothing we do will make a difference. But all change starts somewhere, with one person or one group of people. We have more reason than anyone else on the planet to make these changes happen. The earth is our sacred responsibility.
STUDENT LESSON

ECOLOGY: OUR SACRED RESPONSIBILITY

1800 and Froze to Death

December 21, 2019

Sabbath
FOR STUDY

» Memory Text: “You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:6, NKJV).

» Our Beliefs, no. 21, Stewardship: “We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use.”

» Ellen G. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 96, 97

1800 AND FROZE TO DEATH

On April 10, 1815, Mount Tambora, in Indonesia, blew its stack, sending 4,000 feet of mountain into the atmosphere. That’s an estimated 36 cubic miles of volcanic gas, ash, and assorted debris. (To give you some idea of how much that was, the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 was the worst volcanic event in the recorded history of the United States, but it belched up only 1.4 cubic miles of debris.) The eruption of Mount Tambora killed 92,000 people and stole the summer of 1816. Ten thousand people died immediately from tsunamis (massive waves caused by the blast), lava flows, and debris, and 82,000 more died of starvation and other complications caused by the disaster.

Halfway around the world, in New England, no one gave a thought to a mountain in Indonesia having any effect on them. What they didn’t realize was that all the debris in the atmosphere from the volcano would affect the climate everywhere. Winter was mild, but when spring came, it turned colder. May was cold, with lots of ice and snow. By June, temperatures had gone up, and the planting was done. Most crops would never grow, as temperatures plummeted again and snow fell.

During one snowstorm in June a farmer headed out to check on a flock of sheep. He jokingly told his wife that if he wasn’t back in an hour, she should call the neighbors to start looking for him, because June was a bad month to get buried in the snow. They found him three days later, frozen to death. He’d found the sheep and then gotten disoriented and lost his way.

Although no one died from starvation in Vermont, food was scarce. In Craftsbury, kids were eating birch twigs and beech leaves. Mothers had the hardest time, divvying up what little they had so each child could eat. They often went hungry themselves. But even in the face of such hardship, people shared what they had.

The summer of 1816—known to some as Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death—passed. Winter was normal, and the following summer’s harvest was bountiful. But it proved without a doubt that we are all connected on planet Earth. From Mount Tambora, in Indonesia, to Mount Mansfield, in Vermont.
Sunday
RESPONDING


» It’s time to go to the polls. The class election is coming up. Your best friend is running for class president. You love your friend, but you know she won’t do a good job as the president. Running against her is a guy you don’t really like; in fact, you think he’s obnoxious. But you also know he’ll do a great job as president. You just don’t want him to be president. You want your friend to win. How do you vote? If you don’t vote at all, does that make you not responsible for the results of the election? If you vote for the other guy and your friend finds out, what will you say to her?

Monday
BIBLE ANSWERS ON STEWARDSHIP

» Read Genesis 1:26-28; Malachi 3:8-12; 2 Corinthians 9:7.

» At Creation God put all of the earth into our hands and commanded us to take care of the earth and all that is in it. God also expects us to be faithful in all that we have and all that we do.

» What does the word *stewardship* mean?

» How can we be good stewards about how we spend and use money?

» How can we be good stewards of our time?

» In what ways do you show that you are a good steward of the blessings God has given you?

» Read Genesis 1 and answer the following questions.

1. How does God expect you to care for the earth, His creations, and His children?

2. Give examples showing what you can do today to be involved in the care of the God’s creations:
   - Caring for the environment (plants, water, air):
   - Taking care of God’s creatures (pets, birds, wild animals, their habitats):
   - Providing for His children (emotionally, physically, spiritually):

Tuesday
REFLECTING

» Read John 13:34.

The environment, government, humanity: these are big, heavy subjects that grown-ups deal with, right? Yet God expects everyone to care about these things, because in caring about them we care about each other. In our reading today Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (NKJV). If we care about electing good, honest officials to government positions, we are helping people be treated fairly and decently.

If we do what we can to preserve the environment, we are helping to protect it for animals and people in the future. And if we help all the
people who suffer from famine and other disasters, we are truly “loving our brother” as Jesus asked us to do.

But none of that happens while we’re sitting on the couch playing video games or watching TV. It happens when we care enough to get involved. That’s how we make a difference. Sure, maybe we can’t do much at first. Doing is one way we learn and grow. Not everything we do right now is meant to produce immediate changes. God realizes that these things take time. That’s why it’s important we don’t drop the ecology ball. We need to pick it up and carry it into the future. A future that honors God and His principles. A future that reaches every human being on earth with the love of God. A future that will carry us into heaven.

Wednesday
BIBLE INSIGHTS

» Look up the texts and fill in the blanks. You can find the various Bible versions at BibleGateway.com.

A. “_________ and awe belong to __________; he establishes order in the _________ of ____________.” (Job 25:2, NIV).

B. “You let ______ rule everything your _______ have made. And you put all of it __________ our ________.” (Psalm 8:6, CEV).

C. “The ______ is the ______ and everything in it, the ______, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and ______ it on the ______.” (Psalm 24:1, 2, NIV).

D. “The ______ of my people have lost their ______. They no longer seek ______ from the ________. Therefore, they fail completely, and their ________ are scattered” (Jeremiah 10:21, NLT).

E. “As surely as I live, says the _______ LORD, you abandoned my _______ and left them to be ______ by every _______ _______. And though you were my ____________, you didn’t search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of _______ and left ____ ______ to ______.” (Ezekiel 34:8, NLT).

F. “He has made you the ______ over all the ______ world and has put even the _____ _____ and ________ under your control. You are the ______ of gold” (Daniel 2:38, NLT).

Thursday
CONNECTING

» Read Matthew 25:23.

» Review the memory text.

» If someone came into your room and trashed it, then left, would you throw up your hands and say, “Well, that’s it. I’ll have to live with a messy room”? Having to clean up someone else’s mess isn’t fair, but life isn’t always fair. Our environment is a mess, the government is in confusion, and humanity will always be suffering somewhere. God does not expect us to solve these problems overnight or by ourselves.

» Wisdom and strength are just two of the gifts God will give to anyone who asks. We need both as we make plans to change our world for the better. We need wisdom so that we will know what needs to be done and how we can do it. And we need strength to carry it through. Right now, when you are interested in exploring the bigger, broader world around you, is the perfect time to ask God what you can do to help make our world a better place. And when He returns, we’ll hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:23, NIV).
Friday

APPLYING

» Read John 15:12.

» Spread a little kindness around. Use the following sheet to record your acts of kindness this week (starting on Sunday). See how simple things can help change the world. Warning: Don’t get caught! This is a secret mission.

Top-Secret Mission


Operative Name: ____________________________

Case Date: _________________________________

Mission Directive: To practice one act of kindness or beauty of the top secret variety each day this week and report back to HQ (headquarters) with details. Important: This mission is top secret. Under no circumstances should your cover be blown. Record your mission below. (In code or invisible ink, if possible.)

Case 1—Sunday: ____________________________

Case 2—Monday: ____________________________

Case 3—Tuesday: ____________________________

Case 4—Wednesday: _________________________

Case 5—Thursday: ____________________________

Case 2—Monday: ____________________________
Case 6—Friday:

Observations and Field Notes: