

# How to Care for Creation

*Timothy Project*

Student Manual

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## LESSON

# 1

# THE EARTH BELONGS TO GOD

**Theme text: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24.1a).**

## I

## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In the last 20 years, greater interest has been shown in the environment by international governments with a view to addressing the question of global warming. In particular, inter-governmental climate summits focussing sustainable development have been held in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro; in 2002, in Johannesburg; and again in Rio de Janeiro, in 2012. In 2015, another was held in Paris. The theme was also adopted by the Brazilian Baptist Convention at its annual assembly in 2011, and served as its principal focus for the ensuing year.

The subject has generated international interest, though practical measures are required in order that the aspirations associated with good intentions and public pronouncements become reality.

This manual deals with the theological, political and socio-economic aspects of sustainable development. Action, or the lack of it, in this regard will have positive and negative consequences respectively for the future of our planet.

## II

# AND GOD CREATED THE WORLD

The Bible tells us that he made everything according to his pronouncements: “And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” and so on (Gen 1.3). The Christian believes that God created the earth, the heavens and the seas (Gen 1.1). And the same God, who created the earth and everything in it, also created human beings and ordained that they be stewards of his creation (Gen 1.26).

It is a privilege for men and women to be stewards of planet Earth. This is a great and important responsibility. It is good to remember that there exists in the creative process a fine balance on which our very existence depends. So when we think of the Amazon rain forest, the ozone layer and the atmosphere, we are contemplating the mechanisms that the Creator designed, in order that life on the face of the Earth was sustainable.

Each of these mechanisms has a given purpose: rain forests are one of the principal storehouses of carbon on the planet, and Brazil has the privilege of possessing the largest tropical rainforest in the world. Trees and other forms of vegetation, absorb carbon from the atmosphere, helping to reduce the increase of greenhouse gases. However, the destruction of the rainforest, in the form of burning and felling of trees, emits vast quantities of carbon dioxide and diminishes the capacity of the rainforest to absorb carbon from the atmosphere (so producing an increase in greenhouse gases). Therefore, when we disrespect these resources, we also disrespect the creator and sustainer of our lives, “The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to man” (Psa 115.16).

## III

# CULTIVATE AND CARE FOR THE EARTH

There is a need to plant crops and cultivate the earth, and this activity was ordained by the Creator (Gen 2.15) and provider of our food resources. We should cultivate the earth responsibly, in order not to prejudice our future and our children’s and grandchildren’s futures. Dr. Haroldo Reimer (speaking to Baptist theological educators at the Fifth Brazilian Congress of Theological Reflection), calls attention to the danger of abusing natural resources in order to satisfy the needs and desires of human beings as “the object of voracity” (exploitation) since “natural resources are finite”. It becomes necessary to reconcile the needs of human beings today with those of future generations in a strategy of “sustainable development”. As such, society is considered as a whole. Sustainable development has in view the greater good, in relation to the production of wealth and its consequences for each segment of the population.

<b>IV</b>	<b>EXERCISE</b>
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- ✓ According to the above text, the purpose of rainforests is:

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- ✓ What happens when we abuse this resource?

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- ✓ In your opinion, what should be the balance between cultivation and exploration of the earth?

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- ✓ What do you understand by sustainable development? Why is such a practice to be recommended today?

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