

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



PRINCE
OF PEACE
Called to Connect



We See God In Creation

April 15 & 16, 2023

In this season of resurrection, in this post-Easter series that we're calling Sacred Earth, we're exploring how our connection with the earth deeply grounds us in our faith. We'll be challenged by the Biblical truth that caring for God's creation isn't just a cool idea for some people but rather a mandate for everyone.

SCRIPTURE TEXTS: GENESIS 1:31, PSALM 19:1, PSALM 95:3-7, PSALM 104:24-25, ROMANS 1:20, ISAIAH 40:25-26, 1 KINGS 19:11-12, PSALM 8:3-9, PSALM 34:8 (READ THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS AS A GROUP)

BACKGROUND INFO

The guiding narrative for the next three weeks is that our connection with the earth grounds us in our faith because caring for God's creation helps us understand God. We are part of God's magnificent creation, and we are connected with every other part of that creation: all living creatures, plants, trees, every kind of growing thing, the climate, and the minerals in the ground we walk upon. There are rich spiritual lessons to be learned in the lifelong process of recognizing our connection to the earth, our place in the ecological web of life, and celebrating the gift that we can know God through deeply knowing and experiencing creation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share about an experience with the natural world that connected you intimately with the Creator.
- ***"Unless we train ourselves to slow down and observe the beauty around us, we miss the endless sermon God is preaching through creation."*** What lessons have you learned through the sermon God preaches through creation? What have you missed?
- ***"We can know God through deeply knowing, experiencing, and caring for creation. How?"***
 - ***"First, be quiet."*** When have you experienced God in a whisper; in a quiet moment that would have been easy to miss?
 - ***"Second, go outside."*** In recent times spent outdoors, how have you heard, seen, smelled, felt, or even tasted God's presence?
 - ***"Third, Commit to One Thing for One Year."*** As a group, brainstorm a list of small things you could do to care for creation. Then, choose one thing to do for one year.
 - ***"Finally, Pray."*** Close your group time today in prayer using the words of Walter Rauschenbusch: *O God, we thank you for this earth, our home; for the wide sky and the blessed sun, for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills and the never-resting winds, for trees and the common grass underfoot. We thank you for our senses by which we hear the songs of birds, and see the splendor of the summer fields, and taste of the autumn fruits, and rejoice in the feel of the snow, and smell the breath of the spring. Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty, and save our souls from being so blind that we pass unseeing when even the common thorn bush is aflame with your glory, O God our creator, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.*

CHALLENGE: Write your own prayer of thanksgiving for Creation using Walter Rauschenbusch's prayer as a model.