

Encourage Green Teens in Christian Stewardship



"Going green" has become the rallying cry for many of today's young people, as they take the initiative to preserve the planet. Schools, celebrities, and media encourage teenagers to be eco-friendly and reduce their "footprint."

Living in an environmentally conscious way is healthy and admirable, as long as teenagers have the proper motives and perspective. The reason we all should take good care of the earth is because God made it and put us in charge of its upkeep. Youth minister Josh Tinley writes that going green actually "can enrich our relationship with God and help us grow spiritually" because such practices "honor what God has lovingly and carefully created."

Environmentalism is a "holiness habit" rooted in Scripture, Tinley says. It ranges from not wasting what God has given us (including our talents) to loving our neighbors, who are fellow creations of God. Most significantly, Tinley proposes that if teenagers can commit to taking shorter showers or joining an environmental club, they also can commit to making time for daily prayer or joining a church youth group.

Researchers say that "green teens" tend to be influential leaders among their peers. They live out their beliefs, and other people tend to follow their actions. When caring and concerned teenagers honor God with their eco-friendly lifestyles, they'll be spreading the good news that our Creator loves and cares for us.

In *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*, Calvin DeWitt offers these principles for honoring God by taking care of his creation:

1. Protect and nourish everything that God created, just as he daily protects and nourishes each of his children.
2. Honor and worship Jesus, through whom God created all things (see John 1:3).
3. Enjoy and appreciate all natural resources without destroying them.
4. During your earthly life, serve God in everything you do and seek his kingdom above all else (see Matthew 6:33).
5. Be content with what you have and work to preserve resources for other people.
6. Don't overwork God's creation, including your bodies. Even God rested on the seventh day.
7. Put your concerns for the environment into practice, and spread the message to other people.



Research shows that green living has definitely taken root among today's teenagers.

- 71% of preteens say "going green" is hot. (Youth Trends)
- 53% of online teenagers say they are "concerned" or "very concerned" about the environment.
- 15% of those kids call themselves "hard-core" environmentalists who are serious about green living. (Jupiter Research)
- In a United Kingdom study, parents say their teenagers influence their green choices as much as the media do.
- 76% of kids in the UK study say they will make a real impact on future social and environmental concerns. (The Future Foundation)



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Use these questions as a springboard for insightful conversations about caring for our planet.

1. Why has the “green” movement become so popular lately? Is it just a fad or here to stay? Explain.
2. Can you be both a Christian and an environmentalist? Explain. What’s the difference between caring for the earth and worshipping it?
3. What motivates you to live “green”? Are you worried about our planet’s future? Why or why not?
4. How are you a good steward of God’s creation? What areas could you improve on, and why?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. God will give your teenagers a healthy respect for the earth and a proper perspective about environmentalism.
2. Your teenagers will use available resources wisely and not be wasteful in any areas of their lives.
3. Your teenagers will appreciate being entrusted with all that God created and be passionate about protecting it.
4. God will help your teenagers witness their faith by how they care for the earth, for other people, and for themselves.

Verse of the Month

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things.” (1 Chronicles 29:11)

As we read in the Genesis account, God made everything—including people, the crown of his creation. He also entrusted us with a huge responsibility: caring for the land, the water, and the creatures he provided for us. So recycling and conserving isn’t just the right thing to do; it’s our job as caretakers of the earth, which belongs to God.

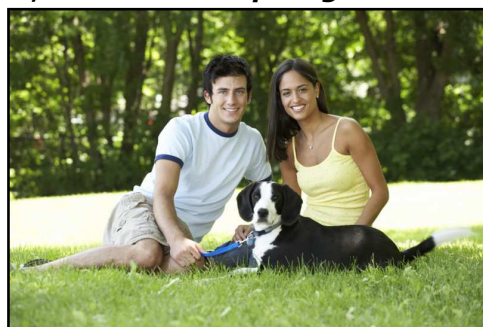
What’s Up With Kids

In the chaos of daily responsibilities, stresses, and activities, do your teenagers “remember to remember” Jesus? Try this life-changing idea from Rick Lawrence, editor of *Group Magazine*:

Every aspect of nature, no matter how mundane, has a message about God’s character and goodness locked up in it. Paul’s declaration in Romans 1:20 about God’s “invisible qualities” proves it. We can wake kids up to those qualities by helping them develop a habit of paying much closer attention to what God has made. This can be a simple daily challenge. At least once a day, wherever you are, pluck a blade of grass, a dandelion, a leaf, a flower—anything from creation—and closely study it. Then ask God to reveal to you his eternal power and divine nature through it.

This sounds far-fetched until you actually do it. God’s Word is true, not rhetorical. Your kids (and you) will be amazed at how eager God is to describe himself through even the most forgettable aspects of his creation. For example, I just plucked a sunflower to study. I asked God to show me something about him through it. The middle of the flower looks like a head of hair, with so many little black “hairs” that it’s impossible to count them. Then God reminded me that “the very hairs on [my] head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30). That has nothing to do with some kind of heavenly inventory. God is trying to tell me he knows me intimately, and he’s paying rapt attention to the details of who I am. He sees me. He loves me.

Ask your kids to develop a daily habit of worshipping God by paying passionate attention to how he reveals himself through nature. Model this yourself, and talk often of how this practice has led you into worship.



MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: This Grammy-nominated band formed in Virginia in 1990 as Burn the Priest. They changed their name but continue playing a combination of heavy metal, death metal, and progressive metal—keyword metal. *Wrath*, their new album, hit number two on the Billboard chart. Lamb of God has headlined the popular OzzFest tour.

Albums: *Wrath* (2009), *Sacrament* (2006), *New American Gospel* (2000)

What Parents Should Know: Despite the band's name and album titles, don't mistake it for a Christian band. Dark lyrics and imagery often mock the church and authority figures.

What Lamb of God Says: Drummer Chris Adler says the band's name "was never a religious thing.... What we're really trying to get across is: Don't always take things at surface level." Guitarist Willie Adler says kids can relate to their music, especially with "the whole feeling of angst and rebellion."

Discussion Questions: Read Romans 13:1-7. Do we have to respect people who abuse authority? What should Christians do when leaders abuse power? Read John 7:24. Why is it dangerous to accept things at surface level? How can you avoid making dangerous assumptions?

Christian Artist

Background: This nu-metal band formed in Tennessee in 2004, and, after only two albums, has become one of the biggest players in Christian rock. Red's music has been nominated for a Grammy and has won a Dove award. *Innocence & Instinct* reached number one on Billboard's indie chart.

Albums: *Innocence & Instinct* (2009), *The End of Silence* (2006)

What Parents Should Know: Red isn't just a "safe" alternative band; these guys are genuinely talented and have had mainstream success as a result. Many of their lyrics deal with overcoming baser instincts and turning toward God.

What Red Says: Singer Michael Barnes calls the song "Never Be the Same" an anthem of redemption. Although we've all gone through difficult situations, he says, "when we look to God and see how he's put us back together again and made us whole, we realize we'll never be the same."

Discussion Questions: Read Psalm 51:1-10. Have you ever cried out to God in a similar way? If so, explain. Why do we continue making mistakes that make such confessions necessary? What does it mean to have a "clean heart"? Does it mean we're perfect? Explain.

FILMWATCH

Movie: *Watchmen*

Genre: Action, Drama

Rating: R (for strong graphic violence, sexuality, nudity, and language)

Synopsis: This is a faithful adaptation of an influential graphic novel. The characters are deeply flawed people who don costumes and try to make the world a better place (at least, as they see it). But this isn't just another superhero movie—or even another "dark" one, such as the recent *Batman* films. There's *nothing* heroic about these superheroes. Because of this film's content, parents should take its R rating *very* seriously.

Discussion Questions: If you could have one superpower, what would it be, and why? Is vigilantism ever justified? Explain. Why do people often find comfort in wearing masks? What types of masks have you worn, and why? Would you act more bravely if your identity were hidden? Why or why not?



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