



Hospitable Planet (HP) Discussion Guide

Reading Schedule

- *Session 1*, week of Apr 25: Environmental Teachings in the Bible: Forward – Chapter 4 (p. 26)
- *Session 2*, week of May 2: Environmental Teachings in the Bible (cont.): Chapters 5 - 9 (p. 60)
- *Session 3*, week of May 9: Environmental Teachings in the Bible (concl.) +
A Call to Action-National Level: Chapters 10 – 13 (p. 88)
- *Session 4*, week of May 16: A Call to Action-National Level (concl.): Chapters 14 – 16 (p. 124)
- *Session 5*, week of May 13: A Call to Action-Local Level: Chapters 17 – 21 (p. 155)

Additional Resources

See below; the list will be added to as the study progresses—*this week we add a few resources that came up during discussion last week*

Session 2

- I. Greetings
- II. Devotion
 - Psalm 24: The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Exod. 19:5: Indeed, the whole earth is mine."
 - Lev. 26:3-12: If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit...And I will walk among you, and will be your god, and you shall be my people.
 - Opening prayer
- III. Highlighting some discussion points last week
 - Expression of & space for environmental grief/ lament
 - Having "faith" can be seen as being optimistic and/or passive, but this book is a call to faith put into action
 - There is cause for hope (e.g. technological solutions, personal choices, policy actions) **but** there is a definite *urgency* to address this climate crisis (note: there is also a twin crisis of loss of biodiversity)
- IV. What is the CC&CJ working group of First Pres Berkeley?
- V. Discussion Questions

Reading Specific questions

- 1) Jurovics says that it is profoundly important to recall the instruction to do no work on the Sabbath and that it is a necessary (though not sufficient) element of creation care (p.28); that indeed "the Sabbath and creation are inextricably linked". How do you

make sense of this? How might our Sabbath experience today differ from what our ancient ancestors' experience might have been like?

- 2) What are your thoughts on Deut. 22:6-7 (p. 31)? How does this fit in with climate change? (Note: It may help to draw to mind that, in fact, we are currently facing two related but not identical crises—1) the climate crisis 2) the loss of biodiversity.)
- 3) What are some of the reasons people are vegetarians or vegan? (Consider watching Peaceable Kingdom https://www.tribeofheart.org/sr/pkj_english.htm available on line for free.)
- 4) How might commandments directing what one eats support a connection with the divine (pp.38-39)?
- 5) The injunction in Deuteronomy against needless waste gets to the heart of the sustainability movement. The way we live today *assures* a diminished quality of life for our children and grandchildren (p.44). Sustainability strives to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Do we understand fully the implications of unsustainability? Do we accept the reality of its implications? And if so, do we care? [Of note: At a minimum, inaction assures a heavier financial burden in the future—requiring more difficult compensating measures (p.45).]
- 6) Beyond recycling, discuss your personal efforts to avoid being wasteful, and thus reduce your carbon footprint. (Consider: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2021/02/25/climate-curious-food-waste/> and <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/visualising-the-greenhouse-gas-impact-of-each-food/>)
- 7) The author introduces the term “technopoly” (p. 56). What does it mean? Does it strike you as true that this is a driving force in our society? To push back against technopoly, and allow individuals to make choices what is required? Give an example of what role the government plays in this?

VI. Closing Prayer

Session 1

- I. Welcome all
- II. Devotion
 - Open with a prayer/ a meditation (e.g. poem) and prayer/ or a Biblical reading and a prayer
 - One suggestion:
 - Read Mark 12:29-30
"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."
 - Person reading the scripture can share briefly a reaction/thought regarding the reading and/or how reading *HP* may have shifted their perception of it.
 - Opening prayer
- III. Introduce or review Group Covenant (see below)
- IV. Discussion Questions

Note: Choose an approach and questions suitable for your group. One approach is to use the same general questions each week (see below). Another is to use questions specific to the session and "pick and choose" among them—don't feel that you must cover them all; participants can bring to the fore those that are most stimulating for them. Leaders can choose a combination of these approaches.

General questions (can be used every week)

- What was the most surprising/newest to you?
- What did you not understand or have questions about?
- What was most meaningful to you?/ What might the Spirit be revealing to you or calling to you to do in this moment of your life, regarding this issue?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with the group?

Reading Specific questions

- 8) What are the underlying premises of the biblical study portion of *Hospitable Planet*?
- 9) The author says the Bible is about God, a people, and creation, not just about God and a people (p.3). Do you agree? Is this a new thought for you? Where (in general) in the Bible are these relationships and the laws governing them elucidated?
- 10) We have a certain freedom to interact with the natural world, but the Bible lays out limits; our study will help us understand a collective view of the scriptures. What scripture is credited with giving us the freedom? What have you thought about this scripture up to this point? Are you open to revising your previous/current interpretation? (It is worth noting that the historian Lynn White Jr. has pointed to this verse as the root cause of our ecological crisis.)
- 11) What premise of Western civilization (or Christianity) will stand in the way of our taking action on the climate crisis (p.20)? What else might stand in our way?
- 12) Consider this: "Our inattention to creation-related teachings may distance us from the divine" (p.20). Do you find this relatable?

- 13) What has driven the increase in CO₂ (the biggest cause of global climate change) in the atmosphere? What does the author advocate must be done to curb this?
- 14) a) Jurovics states that there are those who have a strong interest in the status quo, even though the status quo is harming the global community and eroding the habitability of the planet (p.23). How do you think that this can be (i.e., that certain persons would want to extend a system that is no longer functioning for the common good)?
- b) The author maintains that it is when advocates of the status quo come up against our **faith** that they become powerless (p.24). [John Lewis, the late member of congress and civil rights leader, writes powerfully in about this in the first chapter of his book *Across That Bridge*.] Do you agree? What is the ramification of this statement?

V. Closing Prayer

Some Additional Resources

Denominational

- 1) General PCUSA policy on sustainable living and earth care:
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/>
- 2) Environmental racism and justice:
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/environmental-issues/environmental-racism-justice/>
- 3) PCUSA general policy statement history, which shows awareness and concern for the environment over the last several decades:
https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/washington/pdfs/policybrief.pdf

Human's Connection to Other Parts of Nature

- 1) NEW! If you think invertebrates are unintelligent sacks of gut and gonad, this documentary (which won the 2021 Oscar for best documentary) will change your mind: *My Octopus Teacher* <https://www.netflix.com/title/81045007>

Things That Give Us Rational Hope—and a course of action to realize the changes we need

- 1) NEW! Christian and Atmospheric Scientist professor, Katharine Hayhoe, says: *The most important thing you can do to fight climate change is talk about it* (2018):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BvcToPZCLI>
- 2) NEW! Technological advances can help avoid a climate disaster, and we as individuals must hold our government, our employers and ourselves accountable (2021): *How To Avoid A Climate Disaster* by Bill Gates.
- 3) NEW! Effectively an uplifting how-to manual on activism by the Christian, civil rights activist (who marched side by side with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), and member of congress (2017): *Across that Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America* by John Lewis



HP Book Study Group Covenant

As we begin this book group experience, we do so with the desire to listen to God and deepen our understanding of how best to participate with God as stewards of all of God's creation

Values

We hold the following values as essential to our life together during our time together

Curiosity | Yes And

We agree to be open to engaging others' perspectives through a posture of curiosity. "Yes And" allows us to be "both/and" rather than "either/or" and keeps us inclusive and compassionate toward everything. Our goal is to learn with and from each other.

Attentive Listening | To One Another, and To God

We agree to respect and demonstrate loving care for one another by practicing attentive listening by paying full attention to the one speaking, without interruption, talking over others, and refraining from giving advice.

Participation | Engaging with Others

We agree to be mutual stewards of the life of our group, prioritizing our weekly gatherings and inviting every group members' participation, as they feel comfortable. We will be aware of group participation dynamics. If I am someone who tends to be a listener in group settings, I will consider leaning in to share my insights, perspectives, or questions. If I am someone who tends to talk a lot, I will consider practicing moderation to create space and time for others.

Care | "OOPS" and "OUCH"

We agree, in all of our conversations, to assume positive intent in others while also acknowledging potentially negative impact. Anyone can say "ouch" if hurt or offended to stop the process from continuing and explore what's happening and why. Anyone can say "oops" to acknowledge their assumptions and/or to respond to another's "ouch."

Confidentiality | Creating Safe Space

We commit to hold in confidence the personal stories, concerns, and reflections shared in our community. Our bond of trust is essential to creating space for God's good work in each of us to take place.