

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 13 • Issue 4

ECO-FRIENDLY STATE OF MIND

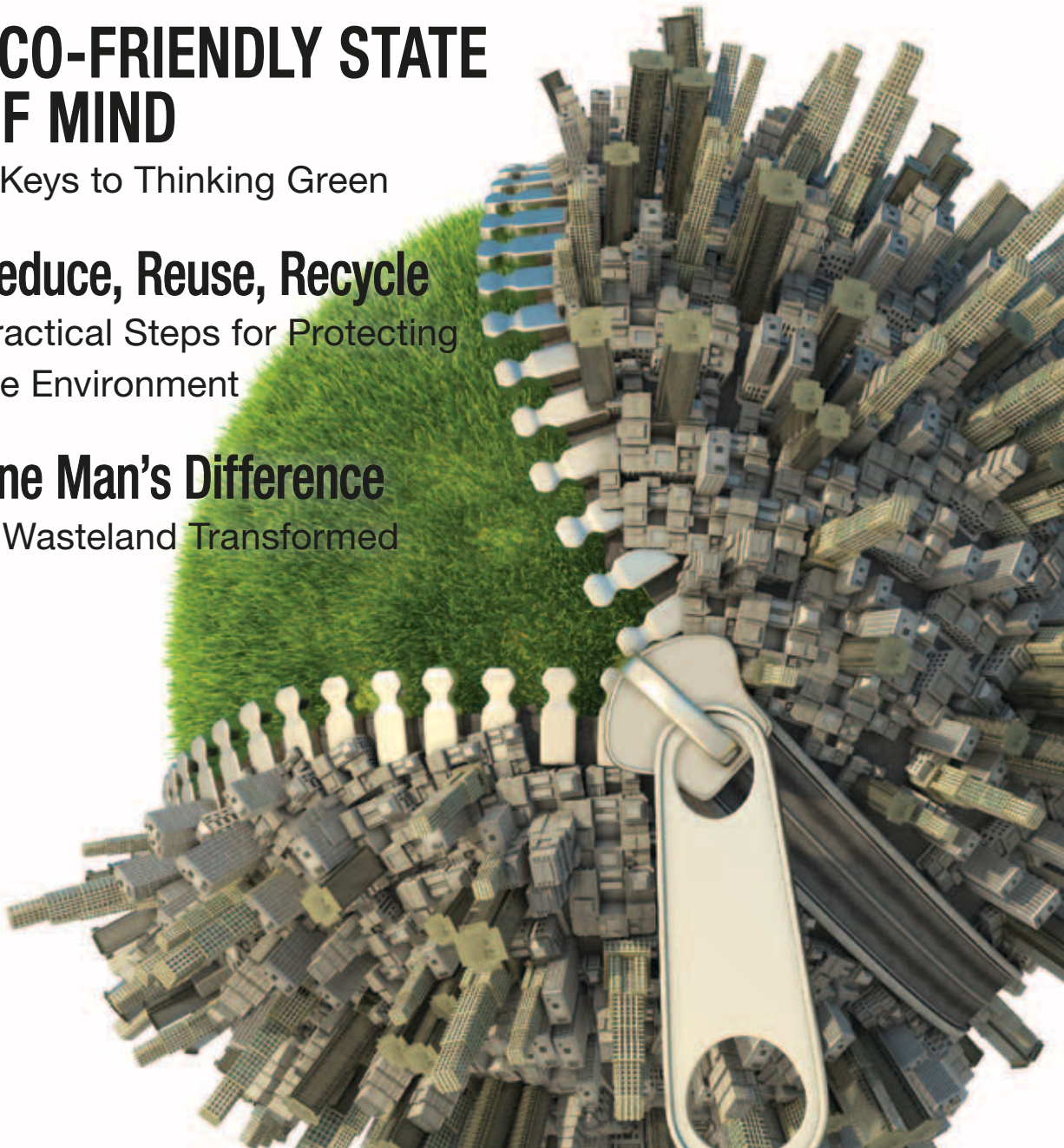
3 Keys to Thinking Green

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Practical Steps for Protecting
the Environment

One Man's Difference

A Wasteland Transformed





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

The Bible tells us that when He had finished creating the heavens and the earth, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”¹

Then God appointed humanity to care for His creation and to manage its resources, not as owners, but as stewards. “The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.”²

But when God looks at His creation today, I’m pretty sure He is far less pleased than He was in the beginning. Much of the world is still beautiful and functioning the way He intended, but parts have greatly deteriorated. Natural forces have taken their toll, but we humans have also played a part. Many of the earth’s ecosystems are failing, animal and plant species are becoming extinct, and resources are being depleted—and it is largely because of humanity’s failure to live up to our commission to “tend and watch over” what has been entrusted to our care.

We share in the responsibility and reap the consequences. Air and water pollution have reduced the quality of life for millions; global warming poses a serious threat to populations in coastal and low-lying areas; deforestation is creating new deserts; misuse of land and water resources is causing severe food shortages, displacing millions of people, and triggering wars in some regions; areas of our oceans, lakes, and rivers are becoming dead zones, devoid of life—all problems that are likely to get worse as world population continues to grow.

Granted, not all of man’s impact on the environment is harmful, and there is also much disagreement over the extent of the environmental problems we face and the best means to solve them. The fact remains, however, that our collective home is in danger and we each share in the responsibility for saving it. Working together and with God’s help, we can do better. A lot better.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. Genesis 1:31
2. Genesis 2:15 NLT

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ONE MAN'S difference

BY CHRIS HUNT

SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT HAS BECOME A SERIOUS CONCERN OF NEARLY EVERY NATION, and debates on how to best achieve this are continuous and often contentious. Overwhelmed by the complexity of the issue, most of us look to scientists and others with more knowledge and resources to find solutions.

Abdul Kareem is one man who hasn't waited on anybody else. If you were to visit him at his home in southern India, you would see acres of rich forest with abundant wildlife. In a part of the world where water is often in short supply, his land and the villages around it have no such problem. But it hasn't always been that way. Twenty-five years ago, the area was a series of dry, rocky, lifeless hills.

Kareem was strangely drawn to the area during visits to his wife's family, who lived there. "I would walk around the area and see barren hillsides," he recalls. "It was a heartache of a sight, and yet the pull on

me was strong. I suddenly realized that I had often—though only for brief moments—dreamt of the Kaavu of India's collective memory. They were the Sacred Groves that every village had once upon a time. I had been told of them as a child. I think I had subconsciously yearned for one."

On an impulse, he bought five acres. In spaces between rocks, he planted saplings of trees native to the region. The well on the property barely yielded a bucketful of water at a time, so for three summers Kareem used a motorbike to haul water from a source a kilometer (about 2/3 mile) away. During this time he also bought adjoining land from neighbors who were happy to exchange their desolate properties for cash.

The fourth year, Kareem's efforts began to pay off. The new vegetation, sparse as it was, helped his land retain more rainwater. The water level in his well rose, and that made it possible for him to gradually plant and tend the rest of his property, which had grown to nearly 13 hectares (32 acres). The transformation was slow but steady. As the saplings grew, birds flocked to the area and sowed the seeds of a variety of other plants. A natural revival was underway. Year by year, more vegetation grew, more wildlife arrived, and the water table continued to rise. As a result, other wells within a 10 kilometer (6.2 mile) radius of Kareem's now also have more water. With few resources at his disposal, Kareem has changed his part of the world, day by day and step by patient step.

CHRIS HUNT LIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND HAS BEEN READING *ACTIVATED* SINCE IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1999. ■

Source: www.goodnewsindia.com/Pages/content/inspirational/abdulKareem.html



eco-friendly state of mind

BY OLIVIA BAUER

AS I WAS GROWING UP, my parents taught me good habits such as conserving electricity and water, not being wasteful with food, and finding new uses for items that had outlived their original purposes. Our family didn't have a lot of money, so taking good care of the things we did have was a logical, practical choice. It never occurred to me to equate these practices with environmentalism.

As a teen, mostly through my love of reading the newspaper, I sometimes became aware of environmental issues, but usually only when activists did something extreme to draw attention to their cause or to "right a wrong"—theft, arson, violent demonstration, and so on. To my teenage mind, those issues seemed far less important than the wars, crimes, and other violence being reported on those same pages. As a result, I associated environmentalism with only the more radical elements, and the term "environmentalist" with those who engaged in bizarre vigilante activities. I continued with the

commonsense practices I'd learned as a child, but still didn't connect this with taking personal responsibility for protecting our environment.

Now that I've read and studied more, I realize that my youthful generalizations were wrong. I'm far from being an expert on environmentalism, but I have a better appreciation of the importance of taking an environmentally-conscious approach to many of my decisions and life in general. For me, having an eco-friendly state of mind involves these elements:

- **AWARENESS.** Reading and studying to remain informed about local, national, and worldwide environmental concerns and solutions, as well as to better understand the ecological systems of the area in which I live.

I am glad that information regarding the products that I buy and the processes related to their manufacture and disposal is easier to come by today than it was in years past. I can choose to use organic, biodegradable

products. I can choose to not support companies that don't, in practice, support the environment.

- **GRATITUDE.** Taking time to appreciate this wonderful world that I'm privileged to live in, to marvel at all God created and orchestrates daily; and to create spaces in my heart and mind for wonder and thanksgiving. Gratefulness and mindfulness go hand in hand.

- **RESPECT.** I believe that part of respecting God is respecting all of His creation. With that in mind, I feel responsible to the 6.9 billion others alive today, as well as to the generations to come, to not take from the planet what can't be replenished, or take more than I need. I will strive to be more thoughtful and less selfish.

I want to continue to learn about the environment and environmental issues. I want to incorporate more environmentally-conscious practices into my lifestyle, beyond conserving

PRAYER FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMON GOOD

By Jane Deren

As we breathe the very air which sustains us,
we remember your love, God,
which gives us life.



Fill us with your compassion for Creation.
Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear,
of all pessimism and hesitation.

Breathe into us solidarity
with all who suffer now
and the future generations who will suffer
because of our environmental irresponsibility.

Move us into action
to save our earth
and to build your sustainable Kingdom.
Amen. ■

Environmental stewardship is a biblical mandate and commission from God. All of God's creation is important to him, down to the last sparrow and blade of grass. We have wrongfully assumed that creation exists for our own consumption. We must get back to the heart of God. It is the responsibility of every true Christian to take stewardship seriously, and that includes environmental stewardship. We need to embrace the task to "tend the garden."¹
—*Tri Robinson, pastor of Boise Vineyard Christian Fellowship Church*

When I am asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse.
—*Paul Hawken*² ■

electricity, water, and other resources, and beyond trying to not pollute our planet. I want to find ways to simplify my life, because I believe that will help me to be less wasteful.

The information available on various environmental matters can be overwhelming and conflicting, and that can be frustrating. It takes time to sort fact from guesswork or unsupported opinion. It takes balance to not be carried away by the enthusiasm surrounding one area or idea to the neglect of others. It takes discipline and patience to be consistent and vigilant. I can't abide by every environmentally-friendly practice that has been suggested, but I can do what I can.

OLIVIA BAUER IS A COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT IN WINNIPEG, CANADA, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. Genesis 2:15

2. Author of *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*. NY: Viking, 2007

REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE

BY ABI F. MAY



FINDING WAYS TO REDUCE OUR CONSUMPTION, reuse items, and recycle are practical ways in which each of us can care for the environment. As a bonus, these simple measures will often help trim household expenses.

♻️ **REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF WASTE YOU GENERATE**

Waste reduction starts when you're shopping. If you regularly throw away spoiled or out-of-date food, you're buying too much. The same applies to the meals you prepare. If you often throw away leftovers, cook less.

Avoid buying items that you expect to use only a few times. Rent or borrow instead, when possible.

Reusable items such as rechargeable batteries are generally more expensive than their disposable counterparts, but they reduce waste and save money in the long run.

♻️ **REUSE EVERYDAY ITEMS**

With a little imagination, many common items can have a secondary purpose. Envelopes can be used to keep receipts or as scratch paper. Cans, jars, and boxes make good storage containers. Old clothes and linens can be cut into cleaning rags. Materials for craft projects can be salvaged from all sorts of worn-out or broken items. Stale bread is great for French toast or bread pudding. Turn bruised fruit into sauce or jam.

♻️ **RECYCLE**

More national and local governments are encouraging or requiring recycling, and for good reason. Recycling saves on resources and energy and reduces landfill. Find out where your local recycling facilities are and the guidelines for their use.

Try to buy products that are packaged in or have been made from recycled material.

Avoid buying products that can't be recycled without harming the environment, such as certain household cleaners that contain toxic ingredients.

Compost organic waste.

Start or join community recycling projects. Learn from others and share what you have learned.

You may not need something any longer, but someone else may. Offer unwanted items to family or friends, or give them to charity. You may also be able to sell some items online or at a secondhand market.

Join a recycling network such as the Freecycle Network™ (www.freecycle.org). This is an internet-based nonprofit community with more than 8 million members in over 85 countries worldwide. Its members freely offer or swap items they no longer need. It is estimated that over 500 tons of garbage is kept out of landfills each day as a result of the sharing done over this network alone. ■

POINTS TO PONDER

Our World

A human being is part of the whole, called by us “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole [of] nature in its beauty.—*Albert Einstein*

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.—*Native American Proverb*

There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed.—*Mahatma Gandhi*

When we heal the earth, we heal ourselves.—*David Orr*

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong we may begin to use it with love and respect.—*Aldo Leopold*

Waste is a tax on the whole people.—*Albert W. Atwood*

The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.—*Gaylord Nelson*

When we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples.—*Pope John Paul II*

There is hope if people will begin to awaken that spiritual part of themselves, that heartfelt knowledge that we are caretakers of this planet.—*Brooke Medicine Eagle*

The activist is not the man who says the river is dirty. The activist is the man who cleans up the river.—*Ross Perot*

Environmental sustainability is not an option—it is a necessity. For economies to flourish, for global poverty to be banished, for the well-being of the world's people to be enhanced—not just in this generation but in succeeding generations—we have a compelling and ever more urgent duty of stewardship to take care of the natural environment and resources on which our economic activity and social fabric depends.

—*Gordon Brown*

By accepting responsibility, we take effective steps toward our goal: an inclusive human society on a habitable planet, a society that works for all humans and for all nonhumans. By accepting responsibility, we move closer to creating a world that works for all.—*Sharif M. Abdullah* ■



What the Bible Says About God, the Natural World,

The natural world was made by God.

Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.—*Job 12:7–10 NIV*

In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.—*Psalm 95:4–5*

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.—*John 1:3*

The power and wisdom of God can be seen in nature.

Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders. Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who has perfect knowledge?—*Job 37:14–16 NIV*

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.—*Psalm 19:1 NIV*

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.—*Isaiah 40:26 NIV*

Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.—*Romans 1:20 NIV*

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both large and small.
—*Psalm 104:24–25 NLT*

God and nature have a living relationship.

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.—*Psalm 19:1 NLT*

The earth is full of [God's] unending love.—*Psalm 33:5 NIV*

You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops. The grasslands of the wilderness overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.—*Psalm 65:9–10, 12–13 NIV*

The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.—*Psalm 145:9 NIV*

The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.—*Isaiah 43:20*

You have made heaven, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all.—*Nehemiah 9:6*

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them.—*Matthew 6:26*

God expects us to take care of the natural world.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”—*Genesis 1:26 NIV*

The land belongs to me. You are only foreigners and tenant farmers working for me.—*Leviticus 25:23 NLT*

A righteous man regards the life of his animal.—*Proverbs 12:10*

Lack of care for His creation displeases God.

They have made it an empty wasteland; I hear its mournful cry. The whole land is desolate, and no one even cares.—*Jeremiah 12:11 NLT*

Woe to you shepherds who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice

animals, but you do not take care of the flock.—*Ezekiel 34:2–3 NIV*

Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?—*Ezekiel 34:18 NIV*

If we don't take care of our planet, we will suffer the consequences.

The earth mourns and dries up, and the crops waste away and wither. Even the greatest people on earth waste away. The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted God's instructions, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse consumes the earth.—*Isaiah 24:4–6 NLT*

The time has come for rewarding your servants the prophets and people—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.—*Revelation 11:18 NIV* ■

A NATURAL FAITH

GOD MADE THE FORESTS, THE TINY STARS, and the wild winds—and I think that he made them partly as a balance for that kind of civilization that would choke the spirit of joy out of our hearts. He made the great open places for the people who want to be alone with him and talk to him, away from the crowds that kill all reverence. And I think that he is glad at times to have us forget our cares and responsibilities that we may be nearer him—as Jesus was when he crept away into the wilderness to pray.—*Margaret Elizabeth Sangster*

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass—grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence.—*Mother Teresa*

The universe is but one vast symbol of God.—*Thomas Carlyle*

The world is God's epistle to mankind. His thoughts are flashing upon us from every direction.—*Plato*

The world is the first Bible that God made for the instruction of man.—*Clement of Alexandria*

God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars.—*Martin Luther*

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.—*George Washington Carver*

And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
—*William Shakespeare*

The Bible is best read and understood outdoors, and the farther outdoors the better. Or that has been my experience of it. Passages that within walls seem improbable or incredible, outdoors seem merely natural. That is because outdoors we are confronted everywhere with wonders; we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary, but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread. Whoever really has considered the lilies of the field or the birds of the air, and pondered the improbability of their existence in this warm world within the cold and empty stellar distances, will hardly balk at the turning of water into wine—which was, after all, a very small miracle. We forget the greater and still continuing miracle by which water (with soil and sunlight) is turned into grapes.—*Wendell Berry*

Nature is the art of God.—*Dante Alighieri*



Man is wise and constantly in quest of more wisdom; but the ultimate wisdom, which deals with beginnings, remains locked in a seed. There it lies, the simplest fact of the universe and at the same time the one which calls forth faith rather than reason.—*Hal Borland*

Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the omnipresent God bursts through everywhere.
—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The works of God above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that book, to show
How God himself is found.
—*John Keble*

I've always regarded nature as the clothing of God.—*Alan Hovhaness*

Love all God's creation, the whole of it, love every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light!

Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. And once you have perceived it, you will be able to comprehend it ceaselessly more and more every day.
—*Fyodor Dostoevsky*

Every flower of the field, every fiber of a plant, every particle of an insect, carries with it the impress of its Maker, and can—if duly considered—read us lectures on ethics or divinity.—*Thomas Pope Blount*

The more I study nature, the more I am amazed at the Creator.
—*Louis Pasteur*

“What is this God?” I asked the earth, and it answered, “I am not He,” and all things that are in the earth made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deeps and the creeping things, and they answered,

“We are not your God; seek higher.” I asked the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and they answered, “Neither are we the God whom you seek.” And I said to all the things that throng about the gateways of the senses, “Tell me something of Him.” And they cried out in a great voice, “He made us.” My questions were my gazing upon them, and their answer was their beauty. I asked the whole frame of the universe about my God and it answered me, “I am not He, but He made me.”
—*Saint Augustine of Hippo*

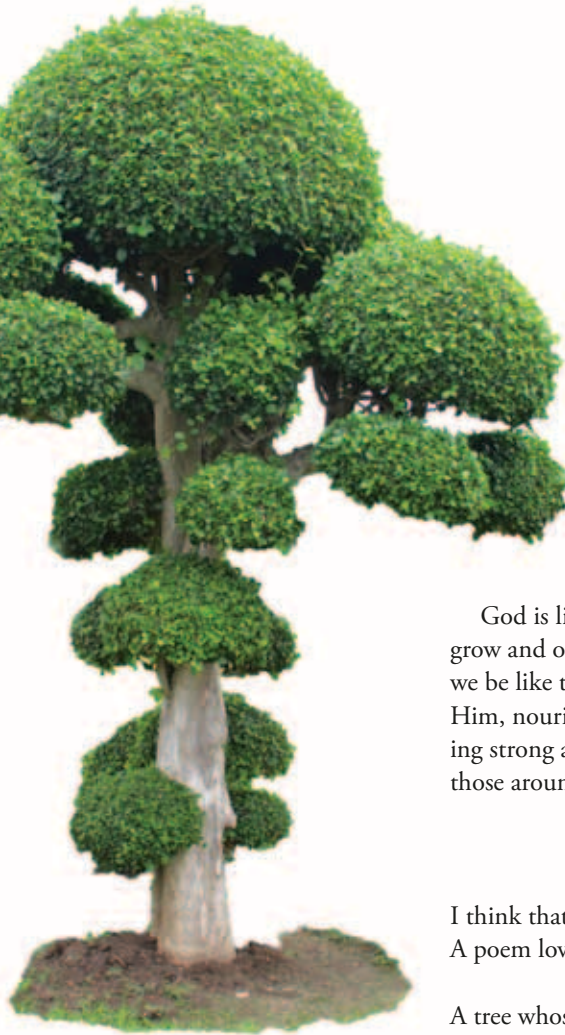
God our heavenly Father, You created the world to serve humanity's needs and to lead them to You. By our own fault we have lost the beautiful relationship which we once had with all Your creation. Help us to see that by restoring our relationship with You we will also restore it with all Your creation. Amen.—*Saint Francis of Assisi* ■

Trees

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

I WAS LOOKING AT A TREE OUTSIDE MY WINDOW AND THINKING HOW BEAUTIFUL AND PERFECT IT IS, producing exactly what God designed it to produce, fruitful and flowering, strong and beautiful, fulfilling its mission in life. A tree is a vision of the perfection of God's creation. Even if a tree is struck by lightning, toppled in a storm, or cut down, the root will send forth new shoots, new life. Isn't that beautiful?

Did you ever notice that a tree is full of smiles? Every parting of the branches is a smile with the corners turned up. You might think it's a big hodgepodge of branches, but it's not. Every single branch has to be perfectly designed and grow at the right place, in the right direction, with the right weight and length on all sides so that the tree won't tip over. Despite weighing tons, look at how it balances on its trunk, like a ballet dancer en pointe.



I don't think the world could get along without trees because of the food and shelter they provide. And if it weren't for the shade from trees, a lot of the brush and shrubbery wouldn't grow, animals wouldn't find a habitat, and the soil would wash away and become a barren desert, as has happened in a lot of places where too many trees were cut. Trees are an absolute necessity to life of both man and animals.

Note: For photos of some amazing trees and the stories behind them see: <http://listverse.com/2011/07/30/10-magnificent-living-trees/>

God is like the earth in which we grow and on which we depend. May we be like trees, firmly planted in Him, nourished by His Word, growing strong and fruitful, a blessing to those around us.



I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

—*Joyce Kilmer (1886–1918)* ■



START EARLY

BY ARIANA ANDREASSEN

MY SON ANTHONY IS A BRIGHT, active, three-year-old who loves to learn new things. A while back, his favorite topic of conversation was lightning. He never seemed to tire of talking about storms, about how buildings sometimes catch fire when hit by lightning, and so on. When he began acting out those scenarios with his Playmobile people and Lego blocks, I channeled his thoughts and energy more positively by teaching him about how Benjamin Franklin had invented the lightning rod to avert such disasters.

A few months later, Anthony paused in the middle of dinner, gave me a thoughtful look, and said something about how some animals are now endangered because they don't have enough food or a place to live. I was curious to know if he actually understood what he was

talking about, so I asked him why the animals had nowhere to live.

He explained that because people are building houses and roads and cutting down trees in the process, animals like koala bears have nowhere to go. Of course, it was a bit muddled, but I could see that he'd gotten the general point and was genuinely concerned that animals were losing their natural habitat. This subject occupied his focus for a few weeks, until the next wonderful discovery came along. I think that was the traditional five senses.

Through talking with my son about Benjamin Franklin, endangered species, and the five senses, I realized how easy it is to influence children when they're young, and therefore how important it is to teach them to make wise, responsible decisions. Children get excited about doing their part to help improve their world, and we can instill in

them a love and respect for the environment from an early age.

Anthony is now passionate about sorting recyclable trash into the proper receptacles, watering plants, and tending the garden. He knows that walking rather than taking the car, when practical, saves money and doesn't pollute, and he is getting better than I am at remembering to turn off lights when leaving a room.

Though it takes time in the beginning to explain concepts in ways children can understand and relate to without getting them worried or upset, it's worth it. It's a joy to see my little one putting thought and effort into caring for the world around him, rather than abusing it or taking it for granted.

ARIANA ANDREASSEN IS A TEACHER AND MOTHER OF TWO IN THAILAND. ■

BIODEGRADABLE?—OR UPGRADABLE?

Will death be the end of you?

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

DEATH IS PART OF THE LIFE CYCLE, not the end of life. This is evident throughout nature, but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the example that Jesus gave His disciples when preparing them for His death. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop.”¹

Paul the Apostle elaborated on this analogy when explaining our “end,” which will actually be our new beginning. “When you sow a seed, it must die in the ground before it can live and grow. And when you sow it, it does not have the same ‘body’ it will have later. What you sow is only a bare seed, maybe

wheat or something else. But God gives it a body that he has planned for it, and God gives each kind of seed its own body. ... It is the same with the dead who are raised to life. The body that is ‘planted’ will ruin and decay, but it is raised to a life that cannot be destroyed. When the body is ‘planted,’ it is without honor, but it is raised in glory. When the body is ‘planted,’ it is weak, but when it is raised, it is powerful. The body that is ‘planted’ is a physical body. When it is raised, it is a spiritual body.”²

It’s hard to imagine what those spiritual bodies will be like, but the Bible gives some clues in its accounts of the resurrected Jesus, coupled

with this statement by Paul: “He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body.”³

Jesus appeared as a man, but usually even His closest friends didn’t recognize Him immediately.⁴ He had substance—“flesh and bones”⁵—walked, talked, and could eat,⁶ but He could also materialize and disappear at will.⁷

Jesus was still very much Himself, but His body had undergone a quantum upgrade. The same will be true for us. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... we will be changed. Then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory.”⁸ ■

1. John 12:24 HCSB

2. 1 Corinthians 15:36–37,42–44 NCV

3. Philipians 3:21 HCSB

4. Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–16,36; John 20:14

5. Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:38–43; John 20:16–17,27; Acts 1:3

6. Luke 24:15–17; John 20:16–17; Acts 1:3

7. Mark 16:19; Luke 24:31,36,51; John 20:19,26; Acts 1:9

8. 1 Corinthians 15:52,54 HCSB

Thank God for His Creation

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

DO YOU ENJOY SPRING STROLLS THROUGH FIELDS OF WILD-FLOWERS, lazy summer days by the beach or pool, autumn's rich colors and smells, winter wonderlands and snow sports? Mountain vistas and wide-open spaces, dense forests and underwater worlds, from the infinitesimal to the infinite, God is the one who made all this possible.

The beauty and majesty of God's creation is fragile, though, and we must each do our part to preserve it for future generations.

When God entrusted His creation to humanity, it was a great gift from a loving Father. This world He gave us to live in and enjoy is extraordinarily beautiful, marvelously balanced, and incredibly diverse, and He deserves our appreciation. In fact, the Bible says that we and all of creation are to praise Him.


For this exercise, divide a page in fourths, one section for each season. Think about what you are most grateful for about each of them, and write that down. Your overall list will probably be different from anyone else's and reflect your unique makeup and preferences. That in itself is a testimony to the diversity of God's design.

Put your list where you will see it throughout the coming months, and take a few moments each time you do to recall your blessings and thank God for them. ■

CREATION PRAISE

Psalm 148:1–13

- ¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!
- ² Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!
- ³ Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all you stars of light!
- ⁴ Praise Him, you heavens of heavens,
And you waters above the heavens!
- ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.
- ⁶ He also established them forever and ever;
He made a decree which shall not pass away.
- ⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,
You great sea creatures and all the depths;
- ⁸ Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
- ⁹ Mountains and all hills;
Fruitful trees and all cedars;
- ¹⁰ Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and flying fowl;
- ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth;
- ¹² Both young men and maidens;
Old men and children.
- ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above the earth and heaven. ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

START ANEW, START TODAY

Life is all about the little decisions you make every day. Decisions of the past have had their effect, but every new day can be a new start. No matter what has happened up till now, you have a chance to make the right decisions today.

Don't waste time reliving the pain of past mistakes and wrong decisions. That only saps your power to do what you can do today. You can't change the past, but the future is what you make it, starting right now, so take full advantage of the present.

Learn from past mistakes and put them behind you today. Forgive those who have wronged you and ask forgiveness from those you have wronged. That probably won't be easy, but don't put it off; do it today. Look to Me and My Word for fresh courage and hope, starting today. Dream new dreams today. Set new goals today. Spend your time on things that truly count today. Love your family today. Be a friend today. Do things better, starting today.

With My help, your future can be filled with wonderful accomplishment and fulfillment that will more than make up for past disappointments—and it all starts today.