

middle school



Lesson 3 / September 15, 2024

All-Natural

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 

Lesson 3

Focus:

Our God made us
for a purpose.

Lesson 3

Bible Basis:

Genesis 1:28-31;
2:8-9, 15-17

Lesson 3

Memory Verse:

The earth is the LORD's, and everything
in it, the world, and all who live in it.
—Psalm 24:1

Students will discover some of the benefits of enjoying nature as they discuss the importance of caring for everything God has made.

Materials:

- Internet access

If your class is meeting online, you can use screen-sharing features on your video chat software to share the video clips. **Did you know that if you're feeling stressed, one of the smartest things you can do is step outside?**

For one thing, you usually do something physical, like walking or running, when you leave the house. And that's good, because exercise has the power to boost your mood.

Being outside helps with feelings of anxiety and sadness. "Nature . . . reduces cognitive fatigue and stress and can be helpful with depression and anxiety," says psychologist Irina Wen. A hike in the woods may be the best medicine of all. There's a scientific study that shows being among the trees brings down stress more than a walk in the city.

However, you don't necessarily need a forest to experience nature's benefits. Sometimes, God's creation can help us even when we're not actually in it.

- **Have you ever seen a photo or a video or a scene from nature and immediately felt yourself relaxing?** (Many of your students have probably experienced this.)

That scientific study showed that walking in the woods lowers stress. Let's try an unscientific study of our own. We're going to watch some scenes from nature on the computer. Focus on the video and see if you notice any changes in your feelings as you watch. Show your students this video [5:24; start at 0:08; stop at 2:30].

5-Minute Calming Nature Scenes for Relaxation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnApf6LAYtM>

➤ **Did watching those images from nature have any effect on your feelings?** (Many of your students probably noticed that they felt more relaxed as they watched.)

There's a lot of beauty in nature. Sometimes, it can even have a positive effect on our mood! God created us to appreciate everything He's made, from forests to clouds.

However, there's a problem: while humans can't create anything as beautiful as the earth, we've developed advanced skills in creating ways to mess it up. God made nature to take care of itself. But that doesn't work when humans dump exhaust into the air or pollute the water.

Pollution is a problem around the world, and the United States has experienced worsening air quality in recent years. The air quality conditions in recent months have made many parts of North America feel smoky, foggy, and difficult to see into the distance.

Show your students the following fire and smoke map of North America, zooming into your state along with any areas that have a lot of fire icons:

Smoke Across North America

<https://fire.airnow.gov/>

➤ **The polluted air and smog probably don't do much to relax you. How do you feel about our air being increasingly polluted?** (Students may use adjectives like concerned or disgusted.)

The bad news is that humans have done a lot of things to mess up the environment. The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way. We have the power to help nature stay . . . well, natural. Let's explore what Genesis teaches us about looking after everything God made.

Additional source:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/better/pop-culture/how-nature-can-solve-life-s-most-challenging-problems-ncna749361>

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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for use as
STEP 4 

Lesson 3

Focus:

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for a purpose.

Lesson 3

Bible Basis:

Genesis 1:28-31;
2:8-9, 15-17

Lesson 3

Memory Verse:

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—Psalm 24:1

Materials:

- A small garbage bag for each student
- Optional: Disposable gloves for each student

Before class, decide which type of litter pick-up your students will participate in. We suggest organizing a litter clean-up on or around the grounds of your church building today as your Step 4. Provide garbage bags and disposable gloves for this activity. If that isn't possible, or if your class is meeting online, challenge your students to use a garbage bag and gloves at home to pick up litter in their own yard or neighborhood.

There are lots of ways that Christians can care for God's creation as He instructed us to do in Genesis. There's a whole list of ideas on pages 6 and 7 of *The Rock*. But today, we're going to finish our lesson with one simple act of creation care: picking up litter that people have left behind.

Yes, collecting other people's trash is gross. They never should have thrown it on the ground in the first place! But litter is a fact of life. Today, let's be part of the solution.

Hand each student a garbage bag. If you will be picking up litter on church grounds, provide a pair of disposable gloves as well. If you are using class time to pick up litter, have the following discussion (if you are sending your students home to do the clean-up, adjust the discussion accordingly). **In a minute, we're going to head outside and collect some litter from around our church building. It's okay to pick things up that are a little gross; we've got gloves and we'll come right inside and wash our hands. But please *don't* collect anything that's sharp, like broken glass or a needle! If you find any of these items, please let me know so I can find a safe way to dispose of such items. It's better to leave that litter on the ground than to risk hurting yourself.**

Take your students outside to collect litter for as long as time permits. Choose a small area to cover where you and your students will be able to see a noticeable result from your efforts. After you dispose of the trash and wash your hands, briefly conclude the lesson.

Today, we fulfilled one of God's purposes for us: we cared for His creation. We cleaned up the area around our church so people can enjoy its natural beauty.

This week, think about ways you can look after the planet that God has given us. No one can single-handedly take care of creation, but it is our purpose to do all we can to make our corner of the world a little bit better.

Close in prayer.

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