

World Day of Prayer 2018 • “All God’s Creation Is Very Good!”

Supplemental Material • Bible Study

By the WDP Committee of Suriname

An Introduction from the Women of WDP Suriname

In recent years, there has been much talk about climate change. Suriname, along with many other countries in the world, feels the effects of climate change due to global warming. Our main city, Paramaribo, is settled near the Atlantic Ocean, and many places are now flooded in the rainy season. Many other countries are faced with drought, hurricanes, and floods. Scientists believe that underlying changes to the environment can have serious consequences. We note the devastating effects of natural disasters on the environment and manmade disasters like polluting rivers with mercury when mining for gold. The harmonious life of humans, animals, and nature is totally out of balance. Many agree that we, as human beings, are responsible for much of that. At the same time, we are the ones who can bring solutions and restore the harmony between humankind and God’s creation.

As women in Suriname, we believe that the Christian faith community can make a great contribution to the preservation of a livable, healthy, and safe environment. Actually, the future of the earth and what we leave for the next generations matter to us. We see this as one of the key elements of the Christian faith. We are reminded of the relationship between God and creation, and God and humanity. It is about having respect for every living thing.

What does it mean to us when we affirm in the Apostle’s Creed: “I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth; I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son; and I believe in the Holy Spirit?” How does this affirmation relate to our faith in action? What is our role as Christians in the world of God? How do we live responsibly in the 21st century?

We are guided by the theme “All God’s creation is very good!” based on Genesis 1:1–31.

Background: Genesis 1:1–31

The word *genesis* means “origin,” “beginning,” or “becoming.” The book of Genesis begins the Bible, in which the divine revelations of God are recorded by people of faith. Genesis testifies to the beginning of life on earth, the creation of humankind, and their responsibility toward creation.

In the creation story (Genesis 1), out of chaos God creates the heavens and the earth. God creates a *cosmos*, a living world (1–26). God finishes the creation by creating humankind in God’s image and likeness (27). Humans then receive God’s commission to take care of God’s creation, which in God’s view is very good (28–31). All of this, God does by speaking, separating, differentiating, and creating. In Genesis, there are statements about the beauty of creation and the place and function of every creature in the whole of creation. “And God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

In Psalm 8, the psalmist looks at the heavens, the moon, and the stars and asks God “What are human beings that you are mindful of them?” The psalmist goes on: “Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands” (3–5). In Suriname, we have seen people take this as permission for humans to treat the world however they want, with no care for creation or creatures. But we believe God calls us to be *stewards*. The psalm does not imply that humankind has the right to make use of God’s creation without being concerned about taking care of it. We, male and female creatures, have to be aware that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and we are called to live in peace and justice with creation.

This material is part of the worship service and educational resource for the 2018 WDP annual celebration. For further information, contact World Day of Prayer USA • 475 Riverside Drive, 15th Floor • New York, NY 10115 • 212.870.2466 • Orders: 888.937.8720 info@wdp-usa.org • www.wdp-usa.org • www.wdp-usa/blog www.facebook.com/worlddayofprayerusa • www.twitter.com/wdpusa

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Bible Study: Contextual Bible Reading

This Bible study method is known as contextual Bible reading. We want to establish a dialogue between our present context and the Bible’s. We start reading the Bible, aware of our present situation so we can listen to the word of God from the past to today. This approach sheds new light on our questions and actions.

The method has four phases. Choose a moderator who is mindful of sharing participation and encouraging conversation.

1. Observation

Read through Genesis 1 and answer the following questions together:

- What does the text say? (Let the text be read many times or in several versions to initiate conversation.)
- What words stand out to you?
- Are there repetitions, movements in the text?
- What is written about creation?
- What is written about humankind?

2. Interpretation

Read through Genesis 1 and answer the following questions together:

- a. Go back to the list from Part 1 and ask: What images come to mind when you hear the words that stand out to you? (Participants should make associations between what is said and their own experience.)
- b. In Genesis 1:22 and 28, God blesses the animals and humankind. How do you hear the blessing of creation in the face

of environmental pollution, natural disasters, the impact of advanced technology, and the abuse of human beings and nature?

- c. How do we, as human beings, use our gifts in caring for creation? What are our tasks in bringing God’s blessing to our context?

4. Conversation

How can we ensure the future of the earth for following generations? Consider, for example,

- food-growing (organic, chemical fertilizers, small scale farming, agro business);
- extraction of minerals (gold, bauxite, etc.), deforestation (clear-cutting leads to less oxygen and to erosion and flooding), harvesting, and hunting and poaching of endangered species, like sea turtles;
- waste management (landfills, recycling, re-use, composting, dumping);
- all forms of violence against children, youth, and women.

Conclude the conversation by summarizing what the theme “All God’s creation is very good!” means for you and for your communities as you receive the charge of caring for God’s creation.

4. Application

- Participants may work together on an environmental project.
- Participants may write poem or prayers, or draw pictures based on the theme. The group might want to assign someone to compile the poems, prayers, and pictures into a book.
- The participants may write down a personal commitment toward the care of God’s creation.