**Lesson Plan 6: The Future of the Earth**

**Lesson aims**

* To look at some of the biblical texts that depict the future and to consider their implications for commitment to environmental care
* To investigate the views of Christian groups who are opposed to environmental care or suspicious of commitment to environmentalism
* To consider how Christians who support environmental care respond to the claims of these groups

**Resources**

* PowerPoint presentation
* Printout of PowerPoint presentation in handout form (one per student)
* Students’ notes from lesson on contemporary Christian views about stewardship

**Starter Activity**

Show the introductory video from the ‘The Future of the Earth’ section of the Beyond Stewardship website (find a link on Slide 2 of the PowerPoint or see **[http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship](http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship" \t "_blank)**). Invite the students to respond to the key question posed at the end of the video.

**Introduction**

Explain to the class that in this lesson they will be examining different Christian beliefs about the end of the world, and how this impacts upon beliefs about environmental care.

**Whole class work**

As a class work, through the PowerPoint presentation.

Slides 3-8 look at biblical texts concerning the end of the world. Explain that many early Christians believed this was an imminent event that would occur within their lifetime, and that the 2 Peter text gives a warning to those Christians who are doubtful of it. Explain that some Christians, especially from evangelical and fundamentalist backgrounds, still adhere to these texts today, and that we shall be looking in more detail at the implications of such views for environmentalism later in the lesson.

Slides 10-14 look at biblical texts that describe the nature of the end of the world. Encourage students to note the differences between the texts. Is the world to be destroyed or renewed? Does the text point towards an age of flourishing and peace or disaster and destruction?

Slides 16-21 look at the implications of these biblical texts about the end of the world for attitudes about environmental care. Interpretation 1 adopts the belief that the world will be transformed rather than destroyed, and therefore that environmental care remains of importance. Interpretation 2 adopts the view that God will destroy the earth, and that converting people to Christianity is therefore of more importance than trying to save the planet. Several examples of Christian individuals and groups who hold such views are cited and can be discussed.

**Group work**

Divide the class into two groups. One group is assigned the Christian belief that the world will be transformed rather than destroyed (in favour of environmentalism); the other the belief that God will destroy the earth (not in favour of environmentalism).

Each group has 15 mins to write a short speech arguing in favour of the view they have been assigned. Biblical texts should be used to substantiate claims, and notes from the lesson on contemporary Christian views about stewardship may also be used.

Students should be encouraged to look in detail at the biblical texts and to think about how they might be interpreted. They may wish to use the ‘Future of the Earth’ section of the Beyond Stewardship website to help them: <http://ex.ac.uk/beyondstewardship>

**Whole class debate**

The first group nominates a spokesperson, who delivers their group’s speech to the rest of the class. Members of the opposite group can then challenge the views of the presenting group, to which members of the presenting group must try to respond, defending their position.

This process is then repeated with the second group.

**Plenary**

At the end, the class may discuss which group they feel presented the most successful argument and why.