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Taking Care of God's Earth

With all the talk about global warming and the "greening" of America, children are bombarded with environmental messages. And while it's important to teach kids to take care of God's Earth, it's even more important to help them understand *why*.

From a young age, children can know that God made all things—including them. As the Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him" (Psalm 24: 1). We conserve natural resources because God has made us caretakers of his creation. It's our job!



Spring's arrival—and Earth Day on April 22—is an ideal time for your family to discuss the environment from a Christian perspective:

Read the Bible's creation account (Genesis 1-2) and other verses about God's provision. Talk about how God designed each of us (Psalm 139: 13-16), is in charge of the stars (Isaiah 40: 26), cares for the birds and flowers (Matthew 6: 25-30), and so on.

Together, note good and bad examples of being God's caretakers of Earth. Point out how litter impacts our environment. Make your children aware of wastefulness at home and in your neighborhood.

Brainstorm ways that your family can pitch in to care for the planet. If you don't already, recycle your discards. Pitch in at church or community clean-up days. Plant trees to commemorate special occasions. When you're enjoying nature, leave it in the same condition as before—or even better.

Cleaning Up Our Act

Americans generate a lot of trash, but many of us make sure the refuse gets reused:

- Each year, a typical family consumes 182 gallons of soda, 104 gallons of milk, and 26 gallons of bottled water.
- Americans recycle about 45 percent of all their paper and 31 percent of all their trash. We recycle 1.75 billion pounds of plastic each year.
- The energy saved by recycling one aluminum can will operate a television for three hours. That's also the equivalent of half a gallon of gasoline.



PowerSource



Talk to God with your kids:

1. Thank God for all the wonderful things he created.
2. Thank God for caring for your family and all of nature.
3. Ask God to give your family a healthy respect for the Earth.
4. Ask God to help your family use resources wisely.

Parenting Insights

In *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*, Calvin DeWitt offers these principles for honoring God by taking care of the Earth:

1. Protect and nourish God's creation, just as he protects and nourishes us.
2. Honor and worship Jesus, through whom God created all things (John 1: 3).
3. Enjoy all of God's natural wonders without destroying them.
4. Serve God in all you do during your earthly life (Matthew 6: 33).
5. Be content with what you have and work to preserve resources for others.
6. Don't overwork God's creation—including your bodies. Even God rested on the seventh day.
7. Put your concerns for the environment into practice, and spread the message to others.

OpenTheBook

**"O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures.... When you give them your breath, life is created, and you renew the face of the earth."
Psalm 104:24, 30**

God turned a void of nothingness into our vast universe. And despite our sinfulness, God faithfully restores the Earth and offers new life to all people.

Teachable Moments

1. **Say aloud a prayer of thanks to God whenever you're "wowed" by his creation.** Inspiration can come from a stunning sunset or a tiny insect.
2. **Remind children how special God made them.** As you care for your kids' physical needs and celebrate milestones, share how God designed their bodies to do amazing things.
3. **While you're enjoying nature, tie in relevant Bible truths.** When you see a rainbow, for example, talk about how God always keeps his promises (see Genesis 8:12-17).



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Do your children know where the world came from—and who made them? Use the questions below to get kids talking about God's creation and their role in caring for it. Ask:

1. What are your favorite things that God has made, and why?
2. If God had asked you to name all the animals in the Garden of Eden, what names would you have chosen?
3. What do you suppose God thinks when people mess up his creation?
4. If you could give people a message from God about taking care of the Earth, what would you say?

Family Experience: Eco-Lympics Party

Start training now for these fun Earth Day activities. As your family enjoys some laughter and together-time, you'll also be pitching in to clean up God's creation!

- **Litterbug Chase**—Visit a littered field or park. Race to collect the most cans, the oldest paper item, and the biggest piece of trash. Have family members create funny stories about how a piece of trash might've ended up there.
- **Nature Hunt**—Go on a scavenger hunt in your yard, a park, or an open-space area. Search for items such as a dandelion, a leaf, a funny-shaped rock, a seed, a live insect, and so on.
- **Trashed Out**—Have family members create sculptures using items from your recycling bins. (Use only safe items.) Display the sculptures for a few weeks as fun reminders to recycle.
- **Earth-Friendly Fare**—At the end of your festivities, serve organically grown local produce. Before eating, thank God for the abundance of food we have.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Nim's Island* (Fox Walden)

Genre: Science fiction/fantasy

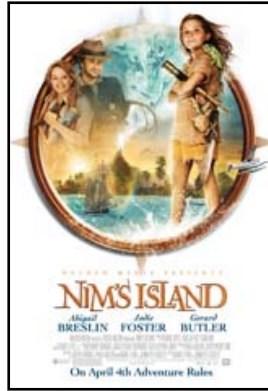
Release Date: April 4

Cast: Abigail Breslin, Jodie Foster, Gerard Butler

Rating: PG for mild adventure action and brief language

Synopsis: Young Nim (Abigail Breslin) lives on a remote island with her scientist father. Nim's imagination rules the magical place, inspired by her favorite literary hero. When Nim's dad goes missing from the island, a twist of fate brings Nim and a big-city author together. They must find courage from their fictional hero to conquer the island.

Discussion Questions: If you could be an imaginary character, who or what would it be? Who in the Bible do you find to be cool or exciting, and why? When you're facing tough times, where do you find courage and strength?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Taylor Swift (self-titled album)

Artist Info: This 19-year-old singer-songwriter burst onto the country-pop music scene in 2006 with the single "Tim McGraw." She already has had three top-40 hits. Swift wasn't intimidated by veterans who said she was too young to succeed. "I'm intimidated by the fear of being average," she says.

Summary: Swift's clean, sugary lyrics are okay for preteen audiences. She sings about past relationships and liking a boy who just wanted to be friends.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Swift's songs are so popular? When do you think kids are ready for boy-girl relationships? Explain. What's so bad about being "average"?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Farm Vet</i>	Kids learn about farm animals by feeding and caring for them.	E for comic mischief and blood; Windows
<i>Disney Friends</i>	In this life-simulation game, kids look out for others.	E for comic mischief; Nintendo DS
<i>Super Smash Bros. Brawl</i>	This "king of the mountain" fighting game is full of animated violence but no blood.	T for cartoon violence and crude humor; Wii

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Children younger than 5 average 9.5 hours of sleep per 24 hours, far short of the 12 to 15 hours recommended for this age group.
- A new niche of fathers known as "alternadads" favors rock T-shirts over suits. These "cool" dads keep their pre-fatherhood hobbies and music preferences. But they're also involved parents, eager to pass on their interests to their children.

Quick Stats

Here's how 4,000 people responded to this online question:

"At what age should kids get their first cell phone?"

- 6-7: **3%**
- 8-9: **6%**
- 10-11: **34%**
- 12-13: **23%**
- 14-16: **16%**
- 17-19: **5%**

When they can afford it: **4%**
 When they start driving: **3%**
 They shouldn't: **1%**



(pediatrics.about.com)

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