



GOOD FAITH READ ALONG

LOVING GOD, NEIGHBOR, AND CREATION

***Dr. Jonathan Moo: How Can Christians
Turn Groans into Growth By
Responding to Ecological Grief?***

A companion guide to Good Faith episode 216
[Listen to the Episode Here.](#)

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

From time to time, the Good Faith podcast slows down to sit with questions that are both ancient and urgently modern. This read-along guide is designed to accompany your listening to our conversation with *New Testament scholar and environmental studies professor Dr. Jonathan Moo*.

You can read it straight through, pause at sections as you listen, or return to it later for personal reflection or group discussion. Like all Good Faith resources, this guide is not about pressuring you into agreement or prescribing political solutions. Our aim is formation rather than consensus as we hope to help listeners engage a complicated topic with theological depth, moral clarity, humility, and hope. *A gentle reminder: you do not need to agree with everything here to engage faithfully. Curiosity, attentiveness, and love of neighbor are more important than certainty.*

“If we see creation as a gift for which we have some responsibility, that opens up all sorts of fresh ways of thinking about how we inhabit the world.”

DR. JONATHAN MOO



WHY CREATION CARE FEELS BOTH OBVIOUS AND CONTROVERSIAL

For many Christians, care for the natural world feels intuitively right. But oftentimes, it also feels really sticky. After all, we love beautiful places. We enjoy the outdoors. We feel awe before mountains, oceans, and star-filled skies. But at the same time, conversations about environmental care and climate change often feel politically charged, morally overwhelming, or spiritually confusing.

Dr. Moo names this tension honestly and gently reminds us that Scripture gives us language not only for joy, but also for lament. Loving God's world does not require pretending everything is fine. In fact, paying attention to creation often heightens our awareness of loss, degradation, and suffering.

The question, therefore, is not whether Christians should care – but what caring looks like, why should we seriously consider it, and what story we believe we are living in as we do.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- When you think about climate issues, what feeling do you experience first: gratitude, grief, confusion, defensiveness, fatigue, something else?
- Have you ever felt that caring about creation put you at odds with your community or tribe? How might you engage more deeply in this topic without compromising the friendships and relationships you value most?
- What makes this topic feel spiritually tender or difficult for you?



A COSMIC GOSPEL: CREATION IN THE STORY OF REDEMPTION

Romans 8 tells us that creation groans. Not because it is disposable or irrelevant, but because it is caught up in humanity's brokenness and longing for redemption. Tied up in that groaning is a profound longing for what God will one day bring about, which is our adoption as the children of God, the redemption of our bodies, and the restoration of all that He created. Dr. Moo reminds us that the hope of the Gospel is not escape from the material world, but its liberation and renewal.

This vision pushes back against the idea that the New Testament abandons concern for the earth or that somehow our heavenly future will be "out there". Instead, it expands the promises of the Old Testament such that salvation, in this telling, is not merely about individual souls going to heaven but rather about God reconciling all things – people, communities, bodies, and even the earth itself.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

ROMANS 8:22-25

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How have you typically imagined salvation? What gets included in this imagining, and what gets left out?
- What changes – in your outlook, your choices, your behaviors -- if creation is not a backdrop to redemption, but part of the story itself?
- Where do you see groaning in the world around you? In your own life?



JESUS, INCARNATION, AND THE GOODNESS OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

Dr. Moo points us to what may be the most radical affirmation of creation in Scripture: the Incarnation. In Jesus, God does not hover above the world or rescue us from it. God takes on flesh. The Word becomes embodied. This is a profound declaration that the material world is not a mistake, not a prison, and definitely not disposable.

Jesus teaches by pointing to seeds, soil, birds, weather, and fields. Paul proclaims the Gospel to nonbelievers by starting with the God who gives rain, food, and fruitful seasons. Creation itself bears witness to God's generosity. And if this is true, then paying attention to the physical world is not a distraction from faith but a key part of how faith is practiced.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- **How does the Incarnation shape the way you think about the physical world?**
- **Where have you experienced God through embodied, material realities?**
- **Do you tend to think of spirituality as primarily internal? Is it possible there are physical dimensions to spirituality you've yet to consider?**



LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR MEANS CARING FOR THEIR PLACE

When Jesus commands us to love our neighbor, He does not limit that love to abstract goodwill or general “thoughts and prayers”. Rather, love shows up in concrete concern for the conditions that shape a neighbor’s life.

Consider this reframing: loving our neighbors includes caring for the neighborhoods they depend on and for the clean water, stable seasons, fertile soil, safe housing, and healthy ecosystems they need to survive. These are not luxuries. They are foundations of human flourishing and around the world, environmental degradation and climate instability are disrupting farming, intensifying poverty, and displacing communities. Who, often, is most impacted? Those who contributed least to the problem.

Seen this way, creation care becomes an expression of neighbor-love, not an abstract environmental ideal.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- When you hear the word “neighbor,” who comes to mind first? Might God be inviting you to expand your definition of this word?
- How might climate issues facilitate hidden injustice?
- What connections do you see between climate change and human well-being? Has it ever felt tempting to minimize the suffering “out there” and, if so, is the Holy Spirit prompting you to reconsider?



DOMINION REIMAGINED: THE LORD BLESS AND KEEP YOU

Genesis tells us that humanity is made in the image of God and given dominion over creation. This passage has sometimes been used to justify exploitation or unchecked consumption. Dr. Moo invites a deeper reading. In Genesis 2, humanity is called to “work and keep” the garden, language also used later to describe the priestly vocation. In fact, dominion, in Scripture, looks less like domination and more like servant leadership that leads to the flourishing of all humanity.

When the New Testament reflects on human rule, it points us to Jesus: the King who reigns by laying down His life. If dominion images God, then it must take the shape of care, restraint, and responsibility, not self-interest or a general sense that what’s happening “out there” is of no concern to those of us “in here”.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

GENESIS 2:15

“work” (‘abad) – to serve, cultivate
“keep” (shamar) – to guard, protect, watch over

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How have you typically understood the idea of dominion? When you look at the leaders around you – professionally, civically, at the state and federal level – how does their approach to rule align with God’s vision for leaders? How does it fall short?
- What would it mean to exercise authority in a way that leads to flourishing for others?
- Where might self-restraint – and even sacrifice – be an act of faithfulness rather than a loss to mourn?

SCIENCE AS VOCATION, NOT THREAT

For some Christians, science – and especially climate science – feel at odds with faith. Consider, then, this framing from Dr. Moo:

Science, at its best, is a human calling to pay attention to God's world. It helps us understand how things work, even as Scripture tells us why they matter and who we are before God. Science cannot tell us what to value or how to love, but it can help us see the consequences of our actions more clearly. This is the pursuit of wisdom, and it requires careful listening.

It might be tempting to reject science outright, but doing so does not protect our faith. Rather, it impoverishes our ability to act responsibly in the world God loves.

"I don't know if my ideas about what to do politically or technologically are the right ones. We need all of us to come to the table and wrestle with that. Because here's the thing: science can reveal truth about the world. I'm always provisional, always open to question and revision, but it can tell us something about the world. It's part of our mandate as human beings, as created in the image of God, to understand the world and to take that seriously."

DR. JONATHAN MOO

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How do you typically relate faith and scientific knowledge? Has there been a tension there for you?
- Where do you feel trust—or distrust—toward experts?
- What might it look like to receive scientific insight as a gift rather than a threat?



FAITHFULNESS THAT BEGINS WITH ATTENTION: TIME TO BEGIN

The scale of the environmental challenges before us can feel overwhelming, even paralyzing. Dr. Moo invites us to resist both despair and hero narratives. We are not called to save the world, but to be faithful within it.

That faithfulness begins not with grand strategies, but with attentiveness—to Scripture, to creation, and to the people and places right in front of us. Before solutions, we are invited to notice: to step outside, to slow down, and to receive the world as gift. Paying attention to the beauty of creation is not a denial of the brokenness that also exists. Rather, it can fuel our wider efforts of stewardship, especially in a culture shaped by fear, cynicism, and consumption. To choose attentiveness and gratitude can be a quiet act of resistance—and a deeply Christian one.

From that posture of attention, Dr. Moo points to local, communal practices like restoring a creek or rethinking how a church uses its land. On a personal level, he also talked about offsetting carbon emissions when he travels using tools like climate stewards. Moving from symbolic gestures to embodied actions bears witnesses to another way of life—forms of small, faithful care that align with the call of the Gospel and point toward a larger hope.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Where do you feel overwhelmed or powerless right now?
- Where have you experienced joy in God's world recently?
- What practices help you slow down and pay attention rather than rush past?
- What forms of faithfulness are actually within reach for you or your community?
- What might it look like to begin—not with answers or fixes—but with love?



ACTION ITEMS FOR YOU IDEAS, PRACTICES, & PRACTICAL TOOLS

- **If you travel a lot: offset every trip (not someday—every time)**
 - Use Climate Stewards' offset tool: go to the calculator, enter your flight (or driving) details, then purchase offsets tied to vetted projects.
 - Make it automatic: set a personal rule like "If I book it, I offset it the same day." Save the confirmation email in a "Travel Offsets" folder so it becomes part of your routine.
 - Action upgrade: if you travel for work, ask your team to build offsets into the travel policy (expensable line item).
- **If you're a "weekend warrior" (outdoorsy): protect what you love locally**
 - Join a recurring restoration effort: creek cleanups, invasive removal, pollinator corridors, native planting (monthly beats once-a-year).
 - Pick one place (a trail, creek, park) and "adopt" it: commit to 4 workdays/year and bring one friend each time.
- **If you're a foodie: shift your plate from "pretty ethical" to "measurably lower carbon"**
 - Make a default: 2–4 plant-forward meals per week (not a vibe—schedule it).
 - Buy from farms using regenerative / soil-building practices when possible (crop rotation, minimal till, pasture-based systems).
 - Cut food waste like it's a bill you refuse to pay: meal plan one week at a time, freeze leftovers, and compost scraps if your city offers it.
- **If you're a homebody: electrify your life one appliance at a time**
 - When something breaks, replace it with electric: heat pump HVAC, heat pump water heater, induction stove, electric dryer.
 - If you can't do big swaps yet: start with weatherization (air sealing + insulation). It's often the quickest way to cut energy use.
 - If you pay utility bills: switch your electricity to cleaner power
 - Choose a renewable/green power option through your utility if available.
 - If you own your home, consider rooftop solar when feasible—or community solar if you can't install panels.
- **If you're involved in a church: make creation care communal (and visible)**
 - Audit the building: lighting, HVAC, insulation, thermostat schedules—then set a goal like 20% energy reduction in 12 months.
 - Use church land: food gardens, native landscaping, pollinator habitat, shade trees.
 - Create a "Creation Care Team" that meets quarterly and owns a simple plan (not just a one-off event).
- **If you're a leader at work: change systems, not just personal behavior**
 - Advocate for: travel offsets, remote-first defaults when possible, energy-efficient offices, supplier standards, and sustainable procurement.
 - Track progress: even a basic annual measurement (travel, electricity) helps move from intention to accountability.



A FINAL THOUGHT

You do not need to solve climate change. You do not need perfect clarity. You do not need to carry this alone. And you do not need to leave your tribe to engage in this topic.

You are, however, invited to engage. To love God. To love your neighbor. To receive creation as gift. And to take the next faithful step, together in community. Faithfulness, after all, often begins simply by paying attention.

Three specific things to consider for a simple start:

- Practice attentiveness in how you move through the world. Where possible, slow down how you get around. Walking, biking, or rethinking transportation isn't about purity or perfection—it's about choosing forms of movement that foster presence, care, and a "good way of life," while honestly acknowledging the costs of what we can't avoid.
- Resist consumerism as a story about human flourishing. Question the assumption that more consumption equals a better life. Faithful stewardship often begins by loosening our grip on endless accumulation and learning to inhabit the world with restraint, gratitude, and freedom rather than fear or excess.
- Pay attention to what you eat—and who and what it affects. Food is one of the most tangible places to practice care. Where possible, seek sources that honor both the earth and the people whose labor makes our meals possible, receiving food with gratitude rather than disconnect or indifference.

"What would constitute a right use of the goodness of God's creation? What would enable the flourishing of other creatures alongside us? If we see creation as a gift for which we have some responsibility, that opens up all sorts of fresh ways of thinking about how we inhabit the world. Christians, above all, ought to have this bigger vision of what human flourishing looks like that doesn't just follow our culture's ideas."

DR. JONATHAN MOO



CLOSING PRAYER

God of creation and redemption, You called this world good and entrusted it to our care.

Teach us to see with clarity, To lament honestly, And to hope without fear.

Free us from paralysis and pride. Form our insistence on ruling over our tiny kingdoms with clenched fists. From the ease with which we argue and retreat to our respective corners.

Help us to live as people of the resurrection – as people who are attentive, courageous, and grounded in Your promises.

May our care for the earth reflect our love for You and our commitment to our neighbors, near and far.

Amen.

SPECIAL THANKS TO
OUR SERIES SPONSOR:



The Arthur
Vining Davis
Foundations

