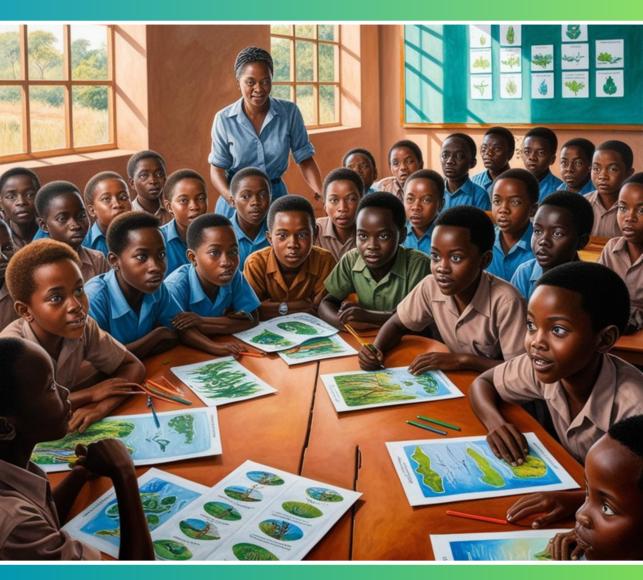


# Protecting the environment a shared concern for students in Dassa





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#### Groupe Biblique des Elèves et Etudiants du Bénin

National Bible Study Department (DNEB)

# Protecting the environment,

a shared concern for students in Dassa



# **DESIGN TEAM NOTE (must-read)**

This Bible study outline is a guide for preparing and leading Bible studies. It's important to remember to do personal study, apply it to your own life and then share it with your group. It's also essential to understand that a Bible study should be prepared with prayer: begins in prayer, unfolds in prayer and ends in prayer, so that God's Spirit can guide and enlighten you both as you prepare and as you lead. You shouldn't see Bible study as a formality or a chore, but as a mirror to help you adjust your life to God's will. You'll need to follow certain steps to make the most of the framework which we will suggest below.

# Step 1: Preparing for personal and group Bible study

In the case of group Bible study, personally study the relevant Bible passage at home using the questions and guidelines provided in this Booklet at home:

Draft a page of Bible study leaders' notes;

Have a discussion with those who are leading the Bible study groups; Improve your leaders' notes by incorporating what the other leaders have said:

Finally, carefully write the final version of the notes you'll use for leading the Bible study.

**NB**: It's important for all leaders to meet for an hour at least the day before to agree on the questions and answers. Questions need to be well formulated and working together will help develop teamwork.

The page on which you write the leaders' notes should not exceed the width or length of the Bible you'll be using,

Put it inside your Bible and look at it from time to time to make progress in reviving Bible study.

#### **Activity 2: Leading a Bible study**

Listen carefully to each member of the group.

Be serious during Bible study, but show your joy (By smiling) when appropriate.

Encourage each participant, especially the shy ones.

Ask the participants not to make fun of the others' answers.

# **Activity 3: Other provisions**

Don't use this guide booklet to lead Bible study Instead, use the leaders' notes created together with the group of Bible study leaders.

# **Background of this Bible Study Guide**

#### **Theological and Biblical Background**

The contemporary Church faces a major challenge: reconciling the Christian faith with environmental responsibility. Too often, spirituality and ecology have been seen as separate, even opposing spheres. Yet from the very beginning of the book of Genesis, God entrusts humanity with the mandate to "work and take care of" creation (Genesis 2:15). This Bible study booklet, designed by the National Department of Scripture Engagement of the Benin Branch of International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (DNEB/GBEEB), under the direction of catalyst Camille YABI and within the framework of the Logos and Cosmos Initiative (LCI), is part of this rediscovery of the Christian calling to environmental stewardship.

#### Socio-Environmental Background

Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly Benin, is suffering the full impact of climate change: extreme heat, soil erosion, disruption of agricultural seasons, flooding, and irregular rainfall. These challenges affect both Christian and non-Christian communities, especially in **Dassa** (central Benin Republic), where access to clean water is often very limited. In light of this reality, this Bible study booklet has been designed to help raise a generation of Christians who can respond to these pressing issues.

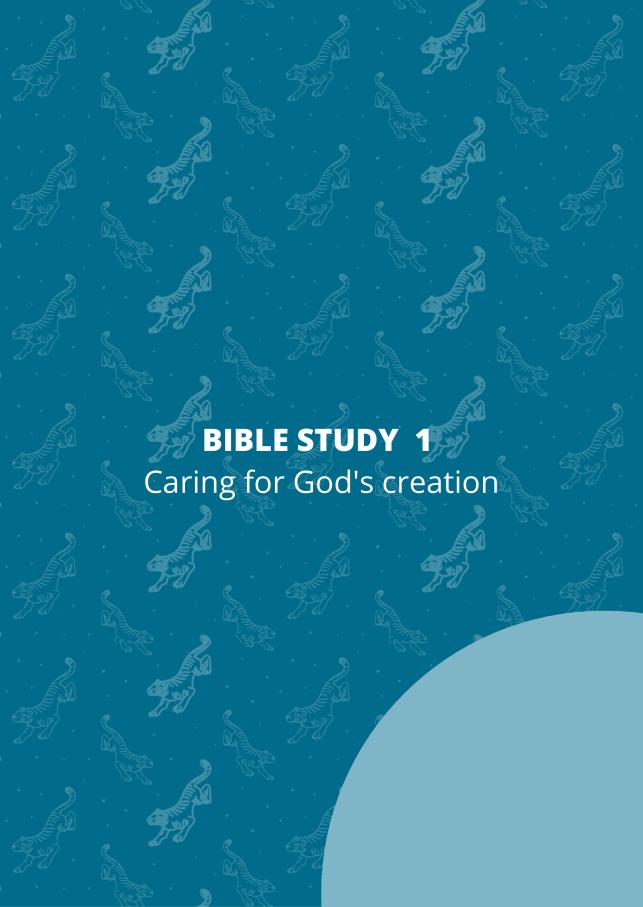
# **Educational and Missionary Background**

GBEEB, the Benin branch of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), has been present in schools and universities for nearly fifty years and holds a privileged position to positively influence Benin's youth. Integrating environmental awareness into its educational mission and supported by IFES through the Logos and Cosmos Initiative, GBEEB is able through initiatives like this to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while remaining faithful to the Gospel.



How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

- Psalms 119:9 (NIV-UK)



# **BIBLE STUDY 1: Caring for God's creation**

Text: Genesis 2:9-15

Verse to be memorised: Genesis 2:15

The creation story underlines the importance God places on the environment. It shows that God has entrusted mankind with the responsibility of caring for and watching over the earth. How can we honor this mission today by respecting God's creation and taking concrete steps to protect our environment?

#### DISCUSSION

#### vv9-14: An abundant and benevolent environment

- **1.** What did God do according to verse 9?
- 2. According to these verses, how did God prepare the environment for the well-being of mankind?
- **3.** Why is the mention of rivers and the diversity of trees significant in showing the richness and abundance of creation?
- 4. Think about the beauty and diversity of nature today. How does it make you feel, and how could you express your gratitude to God for this gift?
- **5.** This passage mentions several resources. In what ways have these resources been/are they used beneficially or destructively by mankind?
- 6. Do you think our modern societies respect God's intention for the use of these resources? What improvements could be made to better manage them?

#### v15: A mission as guardian of creation

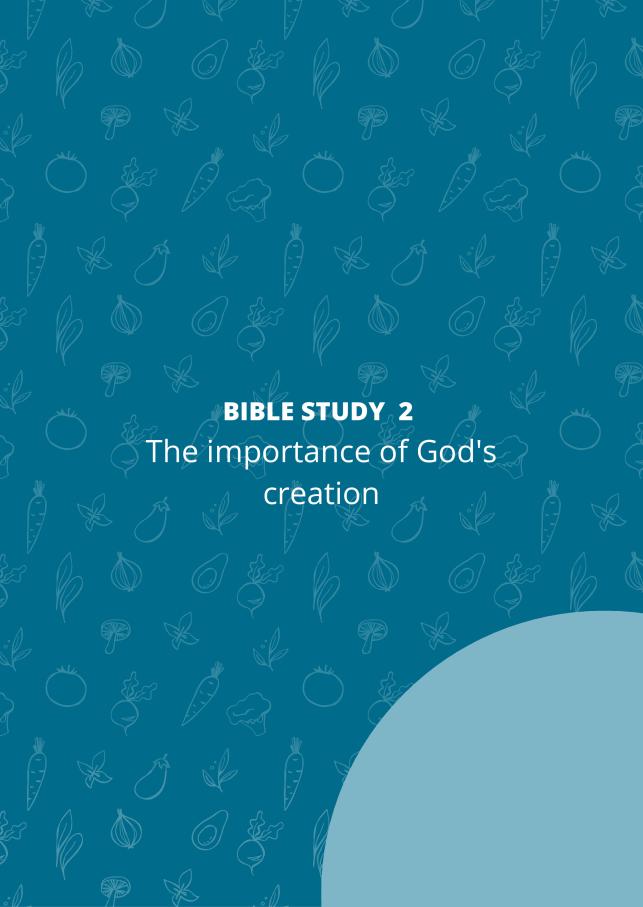
- **7.** According to this verse, what are the two missions God has given man concerning the environment?
- 8. How is cultivating and tending the land an act of worship and obedience to God?
- **9.** What practical steps could you take to protect the environment in your community? What harmful practices would you like to change in your daily life to better respect God's creation?

# **BIBLE STUDY 1: Caring for God's creation**

#### THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Verse 15 states that God has placed man in the garden to cultivate and tend it. This mandate implies not only the use of natural resources, but also their protection and regeneration. Unfortunately, we tend to think of cultivating (exploiting, extracting...) and forget about protecting.

- **1.** Think about your habits in terms of consumption management of natural resources (land, trees, etc.). How can you align them with God's plan for creation?
- 2. Get involved this week in a concrete activity to protect the environment: reduce your water consumption, recycle, take part in a reforestation initiative, and avoid throwing bags on the ground, for example.
- 3. Pray that God will give you the wisdom and strength to respect and protect His creation. Pray also for our leaders, that they will make decisions that favor environmental protection.



# **BIBLE STUDY 2: The importance of God's creation**

**Text**: Psalms 24:1-2

Verse to be memorised: Psalms 24:1

When we know the purpose for which something was made, we get more out of it. Who created everything that exists? Everything we see around us, the land, the sea and all living things, belong to whom? How should understanding who this world belongs to change the way we treat it? How should we care for creation? What responsibilities do we have as stewards or managers of the earth? These are the questions we'll try to answer today as we examine the first two verses of Psalm 24.

#### Discussion

#### v1: Who owns the land?

- 1. What does verse 1 teach us about the earth and all it contains?
- 2. If the earth belongs to God, what does that mean for the way we treat the environment and everything in it?

#### v2: God established the earth

- 3. According to verse 2, who created the earth and the sea?
- 4. What are the things on which God founded the earth?
- 5. Does this surprise you? Why? What lessons does it teach you about God?
- 6. What practical things can you do every day to take care of the environment around you? [Example: sweep your house, don't throw garbage just anywhere (put it in a garbage can), plant trees, protect animals, ...1
- 7. Do you think God is happy or sad when we damage his creation? How can you show respect for God's work?

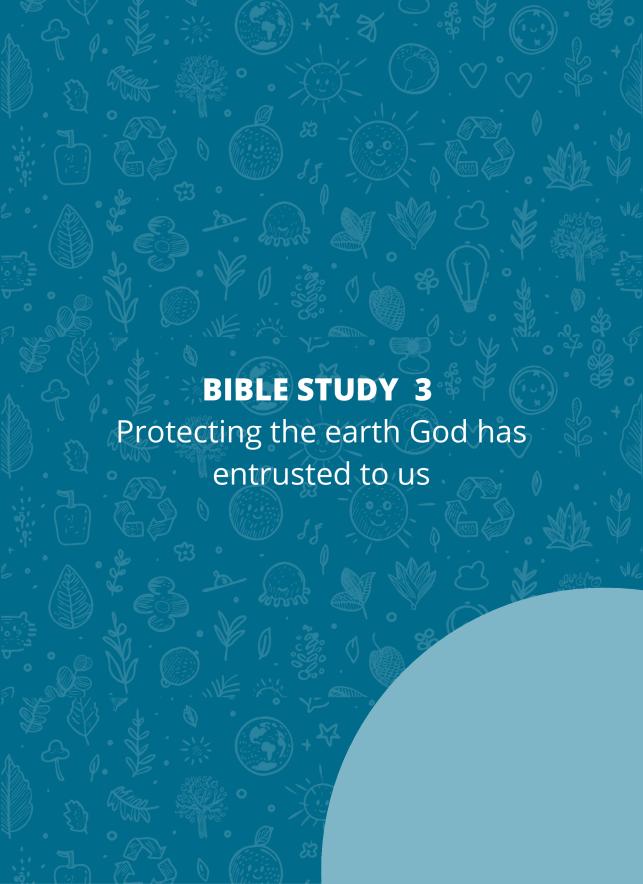
# **BIBLE STUDY 2: The importance of God's creation**

#### PRAYER:

Ask God to help you be a good steward of creation. Pray that the people in your community will understand the importance of protecting the environment. Pray also for our leaders to make decisions that respect God's creation.

#### **ACTION:**

Make a commitment this week to do at least one thing to protect the environment, like picking up litter around you or talking to your friends about protecting nature.



# **BIBLE STUDY 3: Protecting the earth God has** entrusted to us

**Text**: Leviticus 25:1-7

Verse to be memorised: Leviticus 25:4

As someone once said, "We do not inherit the earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children".

Respect for the environment is an important theme in the Bible. God values the earth He created and wants us to take care of it. In Leviticus 25, we discover God's instructions for protecting the earth and allowing all creation to rest. What can we learn from this passage? How can we show our love for God by respecting the environment?

#### Discussion

#### vv1-4: The Sabbath, or rest, for the earth

- What does God ask the Israelites to do every seventh year for the land? Why do you think this was important?
- 2. Why did God institute a year of rest for the earth? Reflect on the importance of rest and restoration in God's creation.

#### vv5-7: Respect for what God gives

- 3. According to verses 5-7, what were the Israelites to do during the Sabbath year? How does this show respect for what God gives and his ability to meet our needs if we obey him?
- 4. If we don't properly care for the land God has given us, what could happen to our environment?
- 5. How do you think we can protect the land today, even if we don't live in an agricultural context like the Israelites?
- 6. Think about how we treat the earth and everything on it today. What can we change to take better care of God's creation?

# **BIBLE STUDY 3: Protecting the earth God has** entrusted to us

#### THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

God gave the earth to mankind to care for, and He wants us to respect and protect it. Thinking about Leviticus 25:4, where God asks us to let the earth rest, consider this:

- 1. What concrete actions can you take this week for the sustainability of the earth and what it produces? (For example: raise awareness of the dangers of using herbicides, ...)
- 2. Pray that God will help you develop habits that show respect for His creation. Ask Him to show you how to be a good steward of what He has given you.
- 3. Pray that our communities, churches and leaders will work together to protect our environment, recognizing that everything belongs to God.

# BIBLE STUDY 4 Creation speaks of God

# **BIBLE STUDY 4: Creation speaks of God**

Text: Job 12:7-11

Verse to be memorised: Job 12:10

The world around us, with its plants, animals and landscapes, is full of wonders that testify to the wisdom and power of a creator. Unfortunately, the preoccupations of our time mean that we are becoming deaf and blind to the lessons that creation should be teaching us. What can we learn from Job 12.7-11, and how should we protect nature that God has entrusted to us?

#### Discussion

#### vv7-9: Lessons from nature

- According to verses 7 and 8, what do the animals, birds, land and fish do?
- What do these creatures reveal to us about God? (v.9) 2.
- Why does the Bible invite us to learn from nature? What does it tell us about God?

#### v10: God's hand in creation

- 3. What does verse 10 tell us about God's relationship with all living things?
- 4. If the life of every creature depends on God, how should we, as followers of Christ, treat nature?

## v11: The importance of thinking

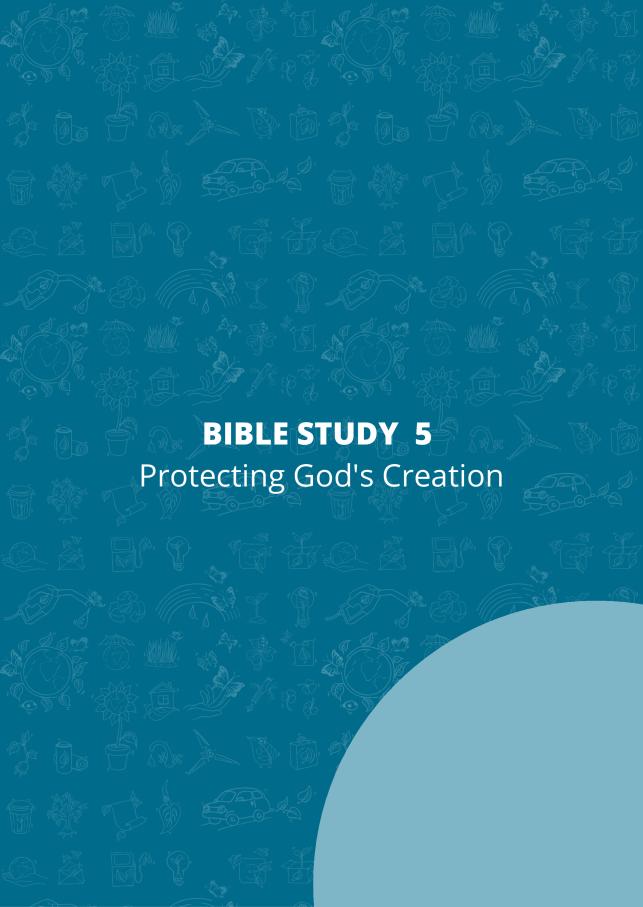
- 5. How does this passage encourage us to think/use our intelligence to understand the value of creation?
- 6. What could you do in your daily life to show that you respect the environment as a precious work of God?

# **BIBLE STUDY 4: Creation speaks of God**

#### THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

The Bible shows that God cares deeply for creation. He calls us to learn from it and respect it.

- Identify a specific way in which you could protect the 1. environment, e.g. by avoiding the use of herbicides that will wipe out certain species that God has given us to use as food or medicine, and so on.
- Reflect on your daily actions: do they respect God's creation? 2. Pray for the wisdom to take better care of the environment.
- Pray that God will help you educate your friends and family about the importance of protecting nature. Pray also that the leaders of our country and of your church will make decisions to protect the environment.



# **BIBLE STUDY 5: Protecting God's Creation**

**Text**: John 6:11-13

Verse to be memorised: John 6:12

In the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, we see Jesus feeding a large crowd using small resources. After performing this miracle, Jesus tells the disciples to do something significant. This passage shows that God places great importance on responsible stewardship of the resources he gives us. As stewards of God's creation, how can we learn to protect and respect the environment?

#### Discussion

# vv11-12: Abundance without waste: a way of life

- What does Jesus do before sharing the loaves and fishes with the crowd? (v.11)
- Why is it important to thank God for the resources we have, even when they seem insufficient?

# v12: Guard against waste

- **3.** What does Jesus ask you to do once everyone has eaten? (v.12)
- **4.** Why do you think Jesus insisted that the leftovers be collected and not thrown away?

## v13: Respect for resources

- 5. How many baskets of leftovers were collected? What does this teach us about the value of what God gives us?
- 6. In your opinion, how can we avoid waste in our daily lives to honor what God offers us?

# **BIBLE STUDY 5: Protecting God's Creation**

#### THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Verse 12 reminds us, "Gather up the pieces that remain, so that nothing is lost." God calls us to be good stewards of creation.

- 1. Think about how you use resources (like water, food, and energy) and ask God to help you avoid waste.
- 2. Make a list of three concrete actions you can take this week to better respect the environment (e.g., make a poster inviting your classmates to respect the environment, avoid throwing away leftover food, avoid eating more than you should and then throwing it up, recycle, etc.).
- **3.** Pray and ask God to give you the wisdom to use resources carefully and to inspire others around you to do the same.

# **GBEEB**

GBEEB stands for Groupe Biblique des Élèves et Étudiants du Bénin. The GBEEB is a movement of students, pupils and professionals (graduates) united around the Word of God. It is a framework for reflection, exchange and sharing between Christians of all denominations. These exchanges take place around the Bible. Members are people who come together to reflect, analyse and search through the Bible for ways to contribute to the transformation of society, the family and the church. The GBEEB is an evangelical, interdenominational movement. It belongs to the large regional family of Groupe Bibliques Universitaires d'Afrique Francophone (GBUAF), which includes 19 countries, and to the large worldwide family IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students), which includes over 160 countries.

Bible study appears to be the GBEEB's main activity. However, it is not an end in itself. It gives participants, whether Christian or not, the opportunity to meet God and respond freely to His challenges. It is the most appropriate means of evangelization and edification in schools and universities, and an expression of our faithfulness to the Scriptures. It is through Bible study that members grow in their personal relationship with God. That's why every leader needs to know how to prepare and lead a Bible study.

GBEEB Transforming students for life.

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If you make a long siege to take a city with which you are at war, you shall not destroy the trees by bringing the axe to them, you shall feed on them and not cut them down; for is the tree of the field a man to be besieged by you?

Deuteronomy 20:19 (NIV-UK)

