

*There were no animals in the enclosures with us, aside from the worms, beetles, roly polies, and spiders we dug up while planting. We were safe, I promise.

Find an area open to the public; take some garbage bags riverside, beachside, or lakeside; and do some cleanup.

viable acorns and drop them off. The organization coordinates the planting, and the world becomes a little greener.

- **Clean up local waterways.** Garbage from many sources ends up in our creeks, rivers, ponds, lakes, and oceans. Find an area open to the public; take some garbage bags riverside, beachside, or lakeside; and do some cleanup.

- **Reduce your use of zip-top baggies and plastic straws.** Really, we should stop using plastic altogether, but if that seems as overwhelming to you as it does to me, gradually cutting down on your use of zip-top baggies is a great first step. Eliminating the use of plastic straws is relatively easy. My family has a bag of reusable straws in our car's glove box, and we just tell drive-through employees to keep the straws they have.

- **Get rid of extra vehicles.** Analyze your family's transportation needs to figure out how many vehicles your household requires. As part of your analysis, research to see what access you have to public transportation. If you feel hesitant to lose an extra set of wheels, consider designating one car a true "extra" vehicle, and make driving it an exception rather than an expectation.

- **Join an Earth Day event.** In most areas you'll likely find some grassroots events in honor of Earth Day, but there are also official events around the world in which you can participate. Check out the map at earthday.org/take-action-now, and no matter where in the world you are on April 22, you can still contribute.

April 22, 2020, marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, but perhaps we could say that the tradition goes back even further—to the sixth day of creation. Even if you already do a lot to support our environment and protect our planet, use April 22 each year as an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary to remind yourself and your family of God's very first commission to humanity and what it means to be good stewards of the earth.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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GOD'S FIRST COMMISSION: STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH

BY BECKY ST. CLAIR

When I was in seventh grade, our teacher arranged for the class to go to the local zoo and plant trees in some of the enclosures. It was hard work, but that's not what I remember most. What I remember is that 1) I was in a zoo enclosure.* (I was practically a zookeeper!!!) and 2) I was doing something good for our planet, and that felt amazing.

Having grown up in a house where trash went in the garbage bin, pop cans were hauled to the recycling center, and lights were turned off when we left a room, I was shocked when I watched a mother and her two young sons drive away from a convenience store tossing candy wrappers out of the car windows.

It is perhaps a combination of these experiences and others that has led me to be conscious of how I teach my own children to treat our planet. Of course, the public knows more about how to do that now than we did back in the 1990s when I

was growing up (and it's also much more popular and trendy to do so), but I believe Christians have a unique calling to be good stewards of the earth.



STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

“God took [Adam] and put him in the garden to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15, *English Standard Version*).

Right at the beginning of the Bible—within the first two chapters, in fact—God gave humans a job: “God took [Adam] and put him in the garden to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15, *English Standard Version*). Now, we know that the earth and everything in it belongs to God, not us (Psalm 24:1), and that the earth (and we) only exist because He chose to make it so (John 1:3). We also know that God has given humans control of the earth (Genesis 1:26), and that in the end, the time will come for “destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Revelation 11:18, *ESV*).

This says to me that while we as humankind are given “dominion” over the earth, the truth remains that God cares deeply for the earth—His own creation—and everything in it, and He isn’t happy if anyone or anything harms it. Our dominion is meant to translate into responsibility, not exploitation.

I’ve always enjoyed family holiday traditions. I have many fond memories of climbing with my sisters onto the hood of our car, slurping Dairy Queen blizzards, and watching the tail end of the race at the speedway before the 4th of July fireworks show. It brings me great joy to look back on the many Christmas Eves we snuggled into our sleeping bags next to the Christmas tree so I could read aloud the Nativity story and “The Night Before Christmas.” And I cringe a bit through my laughter when I remember my sisters and I going outside with pots and wooden spoons to ring (or rather, bang) in the New Year (sorry, neighbors!).

As I’ve grown into an adult, married, and had children of my own, family traditions have become even more meaningful to me, as I am now the one creating them. And while we have traditions for the standard, expected holidays, I have tried to be intentional about introducing traditions for the lesser-celebrated holidays as well. For example: Earth Day.

Begun in 1970 as an opportunity for Americans to speak up for the environment, Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, has since grown into

“My goal is to honor Earth Day with my family every year by doing something that demonstrates our responsibility to care for and protect our planet.”



a global movement involving more than a billion people. It is widely recognized as the largest observance in the world not associated with a specific religion.

Last year for Earth Day, a couple of neighbors, my kids, and I tromped together around the neighborhood, picking up garbage from the streets, gutters, and empty lots. Though our area is usually pretty litter free, it’s amazing what you’ll find when you go looking. At the end of an hour, we had seven paper sacks filled to varying degrees with trash. (We celebrated our accomplishment and hard work with popsicles.)

My goal is to honor Earth Day with my family every year by doing something that demonstrates our responsibility to care for and protect our planet. I have several Earth Day activity ideas for my children to choose from in the coming years, and in case you’re struggling to think of something you and your family can do, I’ll share a few of them here.

- **Plant a bee garden.** Research shows that the honeybee population is dying in unprecedented high numbers and that the loss of bees will be felt deeply across many ecosystems. The Honeybee Conservancy has a great article listing 21 plants that attract honeybees and can bolster their numbers. Visit tinyurl.com/makeabeearden for details.

- **Collect acorns.** A conservation organization in my area is working to re-oak our region, and all we have to do is find

