

Animal Rights

By Paul Golata

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; and Luke 8:26–39, and then read the comments related to Genesis 1:26 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What takes priority in the ministry of Jesus Christ—the physical, moral, and spiritual healing of people or the well-being and flourishing of animals?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Psalm 8:5–6 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: If man is God's appointed ruler over creation, why does God allow animals to be objects of sacrifice (see Genesis 3:21)? What animal imagery is employed by the Bible to describe the necessary sacrifice for mankind (see Genesis 22:8; and John 1:29, 36)?

Assignment Three

God made an unconditional covenant with Noah and all his descendants including every living creature (Genesis 9:8–10). Read the comments related to Genesis 9:1–17, specifically Genesis 9:3, in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How should one respond to the discussion of vegetarianism?

Scripture to Memorize

"God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'" Genesis 1:26

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the relationship between humans and animals as creatures of God and how rightly to relate the stewardship responsibility God has given to man to rule and care for His creation including the animal kingdom.

Paul Golata is a PhD candidate in Ethics and Philosophical Studies at Southwestern Seminary. Paul (www.paulgolata.com) presently serves as a pastor at Genesis Metro Church in Frisco, Texas, a community creating a culture of life change and establishing disciples. He has been actively involved with the start of two successful churches, helping both grow to over five hundred weekly service attendees. A visible leader with exceptional drive, discipline, and organization, Paul is skillful in successfully guiding large groups of people from vision to implementation through complex and often difficult transformations.

He holds an MDivBL from Southwestern Seminary, an MBA from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, and a BSEET from DeVry Institute of Technology in Chicago. Since 1991, Paul has been married to Dianna, and they have four daughters. When not writing youth curriculum, Paul enjoys playing his electric guitar and riding mountain bikes.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Imagine your best friend told you that he has decided to become a vegetarian. He claims he did so because he has come to the conclusion that it is cruel to kill animals for human consumption. He believes humans are not superior to any other animals and all creatures should have equal rights to their existence. As created beings of God, what similarities and distinctions are there between humans and animals? What key relationship has God established for humanity relative to the created order?

Humans Are Image Bearers; Animals Are Not

Read Genesis 1:24–28 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 24–28

Verse 24. Then God said. The Word of God is a creative agent. God speaks and it is so. **Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind.** God is the Creator of all living creatures. This verse specifically refers to every animal, excluding mankind. Not every animal is the same in its nature. A distinction exists among animals. A dog is different from a cow and different from a bird and different from a fish, and so on.

Verse 25. God saw that it was good. God was pleased with His unique creations within the animal kingdom.

Verse 26. Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. Humans (mankind) are made in the image of God and thus have a unique spiritual relationship that demonstrates God has assigned a high value to mankind. Man is a spiritual being that has a soul (mind, will, emotions) and lives in a body (home for the spirit). Animals, though not created in God's image directly, are beings deserving of appropriate human care and respect as part of God's creation.

Verse 27. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. Humans should bow humbly before the honor God has bestowed upon us.

Verse 28. God blessed them. Only humans, not any of the other animals, received a special blessing from God. **subdue it.** Mankind was given authority to be stewards over the entire created order.

Verse 28. rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth. One of the ways humanity reverences God is by ruling over other creatures. As God rules over humanity, in a similar way mankind is to rule over the nonhuman animal kingdom. This ruling includes all creatures of the sea, sky, and earth. It is thus completely comprehensive.

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What takes priority in the ministry of Jesus Christ—the physical, moral, and spiritual healing of people or the well-being and flourishing of animals?

Discussion Question

Mankind is a spiritual being who is capable of a relationship with God. What primary issue hinders mankind's ability to relate properly to God? What specific action did God proactively take about this issue to resolve it? Where does one go to learn about what God did?

On Your Own

Since mankind is made in the image of God, list below specific ways mankind demonstrates God's care over animals and other parts of God's creation. In what ways does mankind demonstrate that God is at the center of our existence?

Humans Are Rulers over Creation; Animals Are Not

Read Psalm 8:4–8 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 5–8

Verse 5. And You crown him with glory and majesty! God gives man a spiritual crown. This affirms that God sees man as a ruler having dominion over the things of the earth but with a stewardship responsibility. Man is to establish worthy relationships with God, one another, and creation, including its creatures (see Genesis 1:26).

Verse 6. You make him to rule over the works of Your hands. Man is ruler over God's creation. **You have put all things under his feet.** Placement at the feet is a symbol that the created order is to be in a position of submission to God's authority and anyone to whom He so delegates (see 1 Corinthians 15:27; Hebrews 2:8).

Verse 8. The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea. The animal kingdom of the earth is given by God to mankind to rule.

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report what the connection is between the sacrifice of an animal and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the God-man.

Discussion Question

Read out loud Genesis 2:19–20; 1:26, 28; 9:12–17; and Hosea 2:18. How does the fact that God assigned Adam to name the animals demonstrate that man has a unique authority over the animal kingdom?

On Your Own

Animals have in common with humans the ability to feel pain. Why is just the ability to feel pain insufficient to garner the same rights as humans? Write your thoughts below.

A Covenant with Every Living Creature

Read Genesis 9:1–17 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 3, 9–10

God made every living creature to dwell on the earth and eat (see Genesis 1:30). He loves them. **Verse 3. Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you.** The Bible gives

priority to humans, including the right to use animals as food. However, the animal kingdom is connected in a relationship to mankind in a manner that can be compared to the relationship between Christ as Lord and humanity.

Verses 9–10. establish My covenant . . . with every living creature. God has covenanted with every living creature. Mankind is responsible for preserving and helping living beings flourish in a manner that is harmonious to the created order. This responsibility calls mankind to exercise care for creation and specifically those of the animal kingdom. This means mankind is to respect all forms of life and treat them in a manner that allows them dignity and prevents mistreatment and neglect.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on the proper relationship between concern for humans and animals.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to King Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

God is responsible for the creation of everything that exists, which is called the created order. The three most distinctively significant living things God made were (1) men, (2) women, and (3) animals. Animals were not created in the image of God and were made to fill the land, water, and sky (see Genesis 1:25). Both men and women are created in the image of God and commanded to be fruitful and multiply (see Genesis 1:26–28). Mankind was also given the responsibility to subdue the earth and rule over the animals (see Genesis 1:28).

Humans and animals are distinct and different in that (1) humans are spiritual beings having intrinsic value; animals are not spiritual beings, and (2) humans are rulers over animals and the created orders; animals are not rulers over the created order. Both humans and animals are in a covenant with God, which is an expression of God's concern for the general welfare of all created beings.

This God-centered view means humans are image bearers of God and God's designated rulers within creation. Mankind should be stewards of God's creation and work to ensure that animals and other parts of the creation prosper and flourish. God is concerned for the care and welfare of animals (Exodus 23:4, 12; Job 39; Psalm 50:10; Proverbs 12:10; Jonah 4:11; Matthew 10:29; and Luke 12:6).

Animal rights are thus subordinate to human rights. It is not proper to place animal rights on the same plane as human rights because God incarnate, Jesus Christ, the God-man, did not come to earth as an animal but rather as a man to die so that through His atoning sacrifice mankind may be brought back into a personal and eternal relationship with the triune God (see Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:2; Hebrews 9:12, 22; 12:24; 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 3:5; and Revelation 5:9).

Parent Question

All creation is moving toward a peaceful kingdom (Isaiah 11), which has not yet come to pass. But until that time arrives, what are our biblical duties and responsibilities toward the animal kingdom?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to teenagers who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.

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