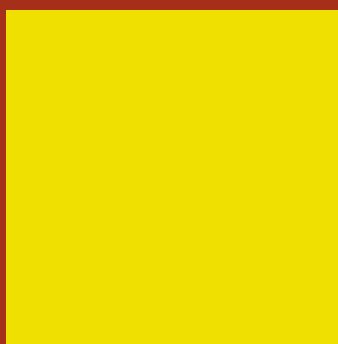


3



ENCOUNTER WITH THE ENVIRONMENT:
SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

MODULE THREE

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this part of the curriculum, the following theme is elaborated: 'encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues'. This package has been developed for the 12- to 18-year-old age group and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of one's own class.

This lesson starts with a biblical text related to this topic. This text serves as the main thread for the core of this lesson. This teacher's book details how the student's book is structured. In addition, extra information about topics covered in the student's book and didactic suggestions are given. This is in the form of alternative assignments and how they could be structured. All this information serves adequately as inspiration for preparing and structuring the lesson.

This teacher's book distinguishes between '*basic learning material*' and '*deeper learning material*'. Basic learning material is covered in the student's book and takes 1 hour to complete. In addition, the teacher has the option to further deepen the students' knowledge by employing an extra section with accompanying information and didactic suggestions provided in this book.

In this lesson, the following chapters will be discussed:

- First, a general sketch of the garden of Eden is given. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- Second, the Bible text itself (Revelation 21:1-22:5) is discussed. What does this story mean for the lives of Christians? What do we learn about the future, the past and especially the present through this text? This chapter is one of the basic teaching materials for the students.
- The third chapter of this manual deals with social justice in relation to climate change. This is an in-depth chapter.

This teacher's book concludes with a glossary in which all difficult terms are explained simply and concisely at the level of the students. This is followed by a bibliography per section of this teaching package.

3.1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE LESSON

1. The student can describe why it is important to study a Bible text in its context.
2. The student asks questions about a text while reading a (possibly violent, discriminating and / or polarizing) Bible text without giving direct answers.
3. The student is prepared to relate his/her point of view on social and ecological environment to the story of the Bible.
4. The student is willing to use the Bible when thinking about current problems in society.
5. The student displays a willingness to handle Bible texts beyond a mere one-time reading.

3.1.2 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

At the beginning of each section, explanations are given about the purpose and content of the section. After that, several didactic suggestions are given. These suggestions include the following aspects:

- **Questions:** These are additional questions that can be used to discuss the lesson in class, without the students working through the student's book independently. Some of the questions can be used to introduce the lesson.
- **Alternative teaching methods and assignments:** These are teaching methods and assignments that can be used to replace parts of the lesson or to supplement (parts of) the lesson.

General suggestions

The different parts of the lesson can be implemented in two ways: individually or in class. These implementations can be combined with having students go through part of the teaching material or assignments as homework in advance. 'Individual' means that the students go through the course material independently.

Regarding in-class implementation, two variants appear in this teacher's book.

- The course material is read together. Throughout the reading, several questions are asked of the students. If necessary, an alternative assignment is used as a conclusion to the lesson.
- The material is implemented by using alternative assignments instead of reading through the student's book.

3.1.3 PLANNING

You can choose to have the students go through the lesson digitally or you can use the printed version of the students' textbook. In both cases, the students can individually complete the lesson independently. The basic learning material is developed for 1 class session. If the lesson is **done in class**, you can go through the lessons in parts. Below is an **example** schedule for a 50-minutes lesson.

1. 4 minutes: Opening + Introduce scenario
2. 5 minutes: View scenario
3. 3 minutes to discuss scenario)
4. 5 minutes: Students make independent section 1: The world of the Bible
5. 3 minutes Discuss section 1
6. 5 minutes: Students make independent section 2: Introducing the world of the story
7. 5 minutes: Review section 2 / Review lesson

3.2. VIDEO



Figure 3.1
The Video Clip

Sarah and David are waiting in line for lunch at school. Sarah shows her new smartphone to David. When they arrive at the counter Sarah gets angry, because from that moment on only vegetarian meals are served. Eva pushes Sarah over and says during an altercation that Sarah is worried about the wrong things. After school, Sarah explains to David that she is not worried about the current world, because eventually there will be a new one. A little later they follow Eva to a building where Eva comes every day. In the building they find Eva, a woman and a child. They enter into a conversation with Eva. By looking into the eyes of a child, Sarah learns an important lesson about life.

DISCUSSION OF THE VIDEO

Discuss the image fragment in class with the students: what did they see?

The following questions are suggestions of questions you could ask. Introductory questions to the first part of this module: 'The world of the Bible.'

- What is the garden of Eden?
- What happened in the garden of Eden according to the Bible?

Introductory questions for the second chapter of this module: 'The world of the story'

- What does your ideal world look like?
- What do you think will happen to the world in the future?
- What is an ideal image or utopia?

Introductory questions for the second chapter of this module: 'Today or tomorrow'

- What is justice?
- How do we make the world a better place?

3.3 JESUS AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

3.3.1 PURPOSE AND CONTENT

This section serves as an introduction to the lesson. The goal is to allow the students to explore the Bible text (Revelation 21:1-22:5) and to let them recall their prior knowledge.

3.3.2 EXERCISES AND ANSWERS

Exercise 1

What does your ideal world look like?

The aim of this assignment is to have the students to think about the concept of the 'ideal world' before they start working on this subject.

Exercise 2

Read the text about the new heaven and the new earth on the next page. Maybe you already know this text, then write down what you think it means.

The aim of this assignment is to appeal to the students' prior knowledge. To answer this task quickly and comprehensively, the Bible text must already be known. Gather the answers from different students to get an idea of the level of the group.

3.3.3 BIBLE TEXT

Revelations 21:1-22:5 (partially)

In the Bible text, some verses have been omitted to make the text shorter. These omissions do not affect the message of the text.

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” - *omitted verses 9-10* - It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. - *omitted verses 15-21* - I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. *Omitted verses 24-25*. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

3.4 JESUS AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

3.4.1 PURPOSE This section contains an explanation of some aspects of the context of the book Revelation of John. The goal is to teach the students something about the world of the first Christians. This knowledge is relevant to better understand the central Bible text of this lesson. The following learning objectives are specifically addressed in this section:

2. The student can describe why it is important to study a Bible text in its context.

3.4.2 CONTENTS In this section, the garden of Eden is discussed. Additionally, the garden of Eden as an ideal image to which it is longing to return is shortly discussed.

3.4.3 EXERCISES AND ANSWERS

Exercise 3

What makes the garden of Eden an ideal place?

- A. The garden of Eden was a beautiful oasis.**
- B. In the garden of Eden, God lived together with people.**
- C. In the garden of Eden animals could talk.**
- D. The garden of Eden was made by God.**

The goal of this assignment is for the students to actively process the text. The correct answers are B and D.

3.4.4 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Garden of Eden

The garden of Eden is described in Genesis 2. It is part of the second origin story in Genesis. This story focuses mainly on the creation of man. The fall described in Genesis 3 should also be included in this story. This story is briefly explained in the student book. Three important aspects of this story are relevant for this lesson: (1) The garden of Eden is a concept that later in history has been equated with the concept of paradise; (2) The exile of humans from the garden marks the loss of this paradise; (3) The garden of Eden is often used to strengthen the fall of those in power and of the rich. The Fall can be viewed as the disappearance of a paradise and as a story explaining why people live in a world filled with hardship and suffering.. To put in perspective the longing of many Christians for the end time, the three described insights are important. This longing can be traced back to the story of the garden of Eden.

3.4.5 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are only helpful if the lesson is taught through classroom instruction.

Suggestions for introductory questions

- What is the garden of Eden?
- What is paradise?
- Why is the garden of Eden often described as a paradise?
- What happened to the garden of Eden according to the Bible?



Figure 3.2
Painting Adam and Eve
in the earth paradise by
Johann Wenzel Peter
Source : news.
stlpublicradio.org via
Wikimedia Commons:
[https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Johann_Wenzel_
Peter_-_Adam_and_Eve_
in_the_earthly_paradise.
jpg.](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Wenzel_Peter_-_Adam_and_Eve_in_the_earthly_paradise.jpg)

Alternative assignments and instruction methods

Assignment. Divide the class into pairs or groups. Let the students look for more information about the garden of Eden. The pairs or groups should present the meaning of Eden in an artistic, funny or poetic way. For example, the students can use the following artistic forms: a poem, a drawing, a poster, a play, or a song. The goal is that the students can indicate which aspects of the meaning of the garden of Eden are visible in their results. Give the students the following questions:

- What is the garden of Eden?
- What makes that garden of Eden a place to which people long to return?
- What does your garden of Eden look like?
- What do you find difficult to understand about the garden of Eden?
- For whom is the garden of Eden intended?
- What in the garden of Eden are we missing in our world?

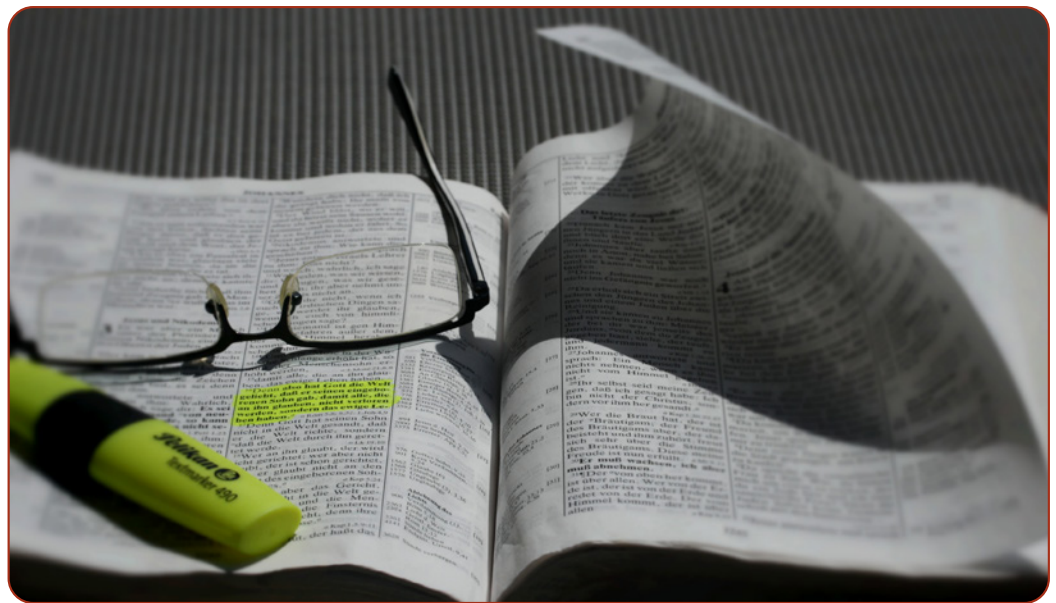


Figure 3.3
Source: © 1045373
Pixabay

3.5 THE WORLD OF THE STORY

3.5.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to have the students study the content of the Bible text. During this process, the students are taught several skills for studying the Bible. In this lesson, the emphasis is on the observation and application of a Bible text. This application aims to connect the text with ideal images. The following learning objectives are specifically addressed in this section:

1. The student can describe why it is important to study a Bible text in its context.
2. The student asks questions about a text while reading a (possibly violent, discriminating and / or polarizing) Bible text without giving direct answers.
3. The student is prepared to relate his own point of view on the social and ecological environment to the story of the Bible.
4. The student displays a willingness to handle Bible texts beyond a mere one-time reading.

3.5.2 CONTENTS

In this lesson, we will focus on a **smaller, more specific portion** of the Bible text. This smaller section (Revelation 21:1-7) describes how a new heaven and earth appears and how God dwells among humans. The students are compelled to explore the connection between a desire for the garden of Eden and the image outlined in Revelation.

Next, the **concept of ideal image** is used to reflect on the image presented in Revelation 21:1-22:5. By using this concept we want to make students aware that their actions still matter in the world, even if they believe that the present earth will be replaced by a better one. This is achieved by making students reflect on a number of ideologies known in the modern world. These ideologies prioritize certain ways of acting to realize this ideal image. The students will have to compare these ideologies and discover that they are not so different from Christian ideas about an ideal society. At the same time, the goal is for the students to understand that these ideologies differ in how they are pursued and that these actions have consequences for society and the world. This insight also applies to how Christians behave in the world.

3.5.3 EXERCISES AND ANSWERS

Exercise 4

Read the excerpt from the Bible text below. What do you notice? Which words stand out to you? What do you find strange? What attracts your attention?

The aim of this assignment is that the students study the Bible fragment attentively. This question fits with the observation phase of the inductive Bible study method.

Exercise 5

The garden of Eden is seen as an ideal, but lost place. The new heaven and new earth, as described here, can also be seen as an ideal place. Thus, in Revelation 21 an ideal world is presented. Describe in your own words what this world looks like.

The goal of this assignment is that the students once again study the main message of the Bible text.

The correct answer is that God and humans will live together in the new Jerusalem, just as they did in Eden.

Exercise 6

Read the following statements. Indicate which one you agree with.

1. Achieving the ideal world is something that people have to try.
2. To reach the perfect world, we may use violence.
3. To achieve an ideal world, tackling climate change is actually not important.
4. People cannot really contribute to achieving the ideal world.
5. It is my job to make people think the same as me, then the ideal world will get closer by itself.

This assignment is designed to encourage the students to think about their own viewpoints. These statements are deliberately diversified, forcing students to think about different aspects of striving for an ideal world or the lack thereof.

Exercise 7

Compare the different ideal images. What do you notice? What are the similarities and differences?

The aim of this assignment is for the students to compare the ideal image of the different ideologies. By comparing these ideologies, we want the students to realize that at their core, most ideologies strive to achieve a society in which everyone can participate and there is no injustice or inequality.

Exercise 8

An important question is whether we are able to reach the ideal world. What is the role we play in achieving an ideal world? Table 1 also contains some actions which followers of an ideology have in mind to reach their ideal world. Compare the different ideologies in what they try to do to reach their ideal image. What do you notice? What are the similarities and differences?

The aim of this assignment is for the students to compare the different ideologies in the way they try to achieve their ideal image. During this comparison, the students should understand that although the ideologies are very similar, the means by which the ideologies try to reach them are very different.

Exercise 9

What do you do to reach your ideal world?

The aim of this assignment is that the students start thinking about what they do themselves in order to achieve an ideal image.

3.5.4 EXERCISES AND ANSWERS

The term 'utopia' was used by Thomas More in 1516 as the title for a book. This book is about an imaginary island where power structures have disappeared, and private property no longer exists. The term 'utopia' was later used in literature, visions of the future and philosophy for descriptions of a supposedly perfect society. It is not necessary for utopian images to be achievable. Alternatively, it may function as a contrast with the situation in a specific setting and time.

The term '**ideal image**' is simpler and reflects part of the concept of utopia. An ideal image represents a person or an object or a society in a manner that can be described as perfect according to a person. For a better understanding, we prefer the term 'ideal image' to 'utopia'.

The term '**ideology**' is a much-debated concept. There are several ways in which it can be defined. In this lesson, we have chosen to fit in with the concept of ideal image.

Interpretation and Relevance Revelation 21:1-22:5

Revelation 21 describes the vision of a **new earth and a new heaven**. This text is often used in discourses about the end of time. The **end of time** refers to the end of the present world and the dawning of a new world. In this lesson, the different visions and ideas about the end time are not discussed. However, it mentioned that this text is central to the various visions of the end of time. It is therefore to be expected that the hope that emanates from this text will also become important in the religious experience of young people.

Revelation 21 comprehensively describes a vision in which it becomes clear how God lets heaven and earth merge and a time of peace and righteousness emerge. In addition, the splendor of the new Jerusalem is described in detail. The vision creates an image of a place that transcends the dreams of its readers. The most important image is the indwelling of God in the new Jerusalem. This image is further emphasized with the statement that no sunlight is needed anymore, because the lamb is the light for the people. In addition, it is also specifically mentioned that there is no temple, because God Himself is present. This makes it clear that peace and justice come about because God lives in the city together with humans. The image describes an ideal of what a world looks like in which God and humans are reunited. The means to achieve this ideal image therefore lies in the presence of God in the world. In practice, this means that we have to live as followers of Christ.

3.5.5 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are only helpful if the lesson is taught through classroom instruction.

Suggestions for introductory questions

- What is an ideal image?
- How to make the world a better place?

Alternative assignments and instruction methods

Assignment. Divide the class into pairs or groups. Students are instructed to imagine their ideal world. As a pair or group, the students must come to a consensus about their shared ideal world. Then the students have to come up with 5 action points that are necessary to make their ideal world become reality.

Assignment. Divide the class into pairs. The students are instructed to look up more information about a specific ideology and/or religion.

The students have to determine what the starting points of an ideology and/or religion are, what their ideal image is, and how this ideology and/or religion is already visible in the world. The students should consider whether this visibility is positive or negative for people's lives in general. Additionally, they can examine the differences between the ideal images of this ideology and that of Christianity. For example, the following ideologies and/or religions can be listed: capitalism, Marxism, ecologism, technologism (techno-utopia), anarchism, libertarianism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism.

In order to prevent 'us-them' rhetoric in the responses, you should make sure you give students clear guidance on how to assess the actions based on their ideologies and/or religions.

The students make a poster on which they answer the questions and briefly present them to each other.

Assignment. Students read the Bible text in at least three different translations, for example, 'New King James Version', 'English Standard Version' and 'New Living Translation'. The students are asked to describe the differences. Then they should think about what the differences in the story make clear and what questions these differences raise about the Bible text.

3.6 JUSTICE FOR TODAY OR TOMORROW?

3.6.1 PURPOSE *This educational package distinguishes between 'basic learning material' and 'going deeper'. This section can be used by the teacher to give the students a deeper understanding of the lesson's content and is not part of the standard package for the students. You can find the student pages in the appendices.*

In this section, students study the connections between the social and ecological environment. The goal is for the students to understand that paying attention to both social and ecological environment is part of the task Jesus gave to the church. The following learning goals are specifically addressed in this section:

1. The student is prepared to relate his own point of view about the social and ecological environment to the story of the Bible.
2. The student is willing to use the Bible when thinking about current problems in society.

3.6.2 CONTENTS This chapter focuses on the concepts of social justice and climate change. It is a short section that aims to connect these concepts.



Figure 3.4
14th-century tapestry
of John watching
the descending New
Jerusalem.
Source: Kimon Berlin via
Wikimedia Commons:
[https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:La_nouvelle_
Jerusalem.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_nouvelle_Jerusalem.jpg).

3.6.3 EXERCISES AND ANSWERS

Exercise 1

What big problems do you find important to give attention to?

The aim of this assignment is for the students to apply the concept of major problems to their own lives.

Exercise 2

Read the following Bible texts:

- **Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**
- **Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**
- **2 Peter 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.**

What do you notice? Which commands to people are given in the Bible texts?

The aim of this assignment is that the students connect the 'big' problems with the Bible and especially with the concept of justice.

Answer: A notable feature of all three texts is the use of the concept of righteousness. The commands are: Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness; Long for righteousness; Trust in God.

Exercise 3

Compare the two types of justice. What are the differences and similarities between these types of justice?

The aim of this assignment is for the students to actively process the concepts of social and ecological justice.

The similarity between the two types is that both are about a fair distribution. In addition, both types emphasize that it is about every human being. The difference between the two types is that social justice emphasizes living in dignity and that everyone is allowed to take part in society and that ecological justice emphasizes the use of nature and the consequences of this use for all people.

Exercise 4

According to many people, bringing justice into the world is connected with taking care of the earth. How can you contribute both socially and ecologically to bringing justice through your own life?

This question is tricky for the students to answer. It is best answered in pairs or small groups. The goal is for the students to think about how they themselves can contribute to bringing social and ecological justice.

Example answer: I can look better at the origins of my clothes. I can also help with cleaning up of my neighborhood. Finally, I can also point out to my parents the importance of taking shorter showers.

3.6.4 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The categorization of the students in the world into social and ecological in the student book is logically done to work towards the concepts of social and ecological justice. Other categories are of course also valid to use, for example social-political and medical problems.

Justice defined

The concept of **justice**, also called righteousness, has over the centuries been applied to different domains and defined in several ways. A widely used classification distinguishes justice as distribution and justice as recognition. Distribution means that the resources in society are distributed fairly among all persons. The concept of resources does not only refer to physical goods, but can also refer to jobs, social positions and physical places. With recognition is meant that by unequal treatment of groups in society injustice can arise and justice can only be accomplished by recognizing these problems.¹

The concepts of social and ecological justice give further substance to the application of the concept of justice. **Social justice** concerns the distribution of wealth in a society from the perspective of the relationship between individuals and society as a whole. This can be translated into the following goal: *Letting every human being live to his full potential and in dignity. To achieve this, every human being must have fair access to the resources necessary for this, have a voice in society's decision-making and be able to live in a loving community.*

For an ever-growing group of Christians this has become an important concept often referred to as "the social gospel".

¹ More information can be found in the article on "Justice" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice/> of June 26, 2017, written by David Miller.

Ecological justice clarifies the relationship between people's actions and the environment. The concept can be applied both broadly and narrowly. In a narrow sense, the concept refers to the fair participation of all people in real use of natural resources and equally distributing the pros and cons associated with this use. In a broad sense, the concept means extending the pursuit of fairness for all living beings on earth. This means that the interests of non-human beings play a role in the fair distribution. In this sense, bringing justice means recognizing how humans affect the ecosystems on earth.

From a Christian perspective, the stewardship of man is often discussed in this context. This means that God has given the earth to humankind to be steward of it. Humans should thus not live as an owner, but as a caregiver and handle the earth carefully.

Connection Social and environmental justice

In 2015, the encyclical *Laudato Si'* written by Pope Francis was published. In this encyclical, Pope Francis presents the image of the earth as a **common home**, which everyone must take care of together. In this publication he poses the following key question: "What kind of world do we want to leave behind to those who come after us, to children who are growing up now?"

Pope Francis reflects on where mankind is today and where mankind needs to head towards. He describes the relationship between **poverty** and the **fragility** of the earth. For him, both these subjects are directly linked. He speaks about an **integral ecology**, which means that all aspects of existence are connected. It is not possible to talk about improving the climate without also discussing all other aspects of existence. At the same time, one cannot talk about helping people in need without talking about pollution. Pope Francis calls for a change of culture by entering into **dialogue** with each other.

The connection between social and ecological problems that Pope Francis addresses fits with an emphasis that has been placed within the Christian world for a longer period of time. As early as 2002, the World Council of Churches called for justice and ecological sustainability not to be dealt in isolation, but as a whole. The Lausanne Movement wrote in the Cape Town Commitment of 2010: "World Poverty and climate change must be tackled together and with the same urgency."²

² The Lausanne Movement. 2010. "The Cape Town Commitment." <https://www.lausanne.org/docs/CapeTownCommitment.pdf>. p. 31

In addition, outside of Christianity, the connection has also been made clear. The fourth report of the UN climate panel states that social problems can both be caused by and are the cause of ecological problems. For example, an increase in refugee numbers can lead to water scarcity, which in turn can lead to social unrest. This example shows how both social problems (large numbers of refugees and social unrest) and ecological problems (lack of water supply) are connected.

3.6.5 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are only helpful if the lesson is taught through classroom instruction.

Suggestions for introductory questions

- What is justice?
- What is injustice?
- What do climate change and injustice have to do with each other?

Alternative assignments and instruction methods

Assignment. Make space in the classroom. The students stand on an imaginary or real line that consists of two poles. Let the students determine their position on the line between the two poles of statements. Examples of opposite statements:

- I can play an important role in combating climate change. <-> I can play no role at all in combating climate change.
- Violence can be used to combat climate change. <-> To combat climate change, violence may not be used.
- If nature worsens, people's lives will also worsen. <-> If nature is worse, people still can live good lives.

After each pair of opposite statements, ask a number of students to explain their position.

³IPCC. 2007. "Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report." IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar4_syr_full_report.pdf. p. 26.

3.7 STUDENT PAGES: JUSTICE FOR TODAY OR TOMORROW?

The day before the start of a new millennium, many people were counting down in suspense. The century preceding this new millennium was full of great and difficult events. For example, two World Wars had taken place in this century. In addition, a hole in the ozone layer threatened the balance of life on earth. The beginning of this new millennium was a moment of **hope**, hope for a change for all people on earth.

This hope was enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals signed by the United Nations in September 2000. These goals were aimed at eradicating poverty, hunger and abuse. However, the optimism seems to have diminished in recent years, because the goals require a lot of effort and many other major **problems** have arisen. Consider problems such as climate change, the rise of societal polarization worldwide, fake news and the problems surrounding privacy.

Many of these problems often seem recent and very urgent. When we look at history, however, we soon discover that 'big' problems occur in all ages. For example, there was far more widespread poverty during the middle ages than we have now. Also, in the Bible some big problems are visible in the stories. For example, the slavery of the people of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1). Furthermore, in the time of Jesus there was exploitation by tax collectors who took a lot of money from people (Luke 19).

We can categorize the big problems into two categories. **Social** problems relate to how people live together, such as the increase in societal polarization. **Ecological** problems relate to how people interact with nature, such as the deforestation of the rainforest.

Exercise 1

Which do you think Jesus was: a peacemaker or someone who sowed division?



Big problems are of all times. The Bible not only contains examples of 'such big' problems but also gives clues on how to deal with these problems. In various books of the Bible God gives directions that people should not only get along well with each other but also actively try to do so. For example, the people of Israel were instructed to pay attention to widows, orphans and foreigners.

Exercise 2

Read the following Bible texts:

MATTHEW 10:34-39

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

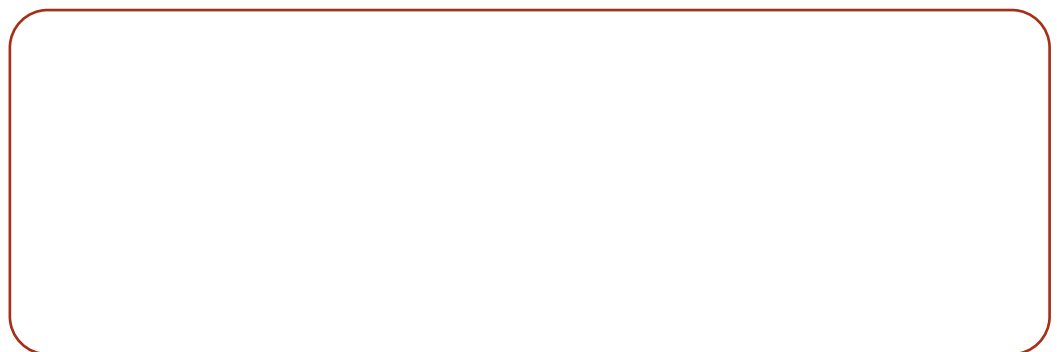
MATTHEW 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

2 PETER 3:13


But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.


What do you notice? Which commands to people are given in the Bible texts?



All the Bible texts of exercise 2 contain the word 'righteousness'. The image of the future of the new and heaven and earth in 2 Peter 3:13 means that righteousness is only for the future. Indeed, the other texts make it clear that we may long for righteousness already now.

Righteousness is often also called justice. Justice has to do with the problems in the world and those in your own life. Think, for example, of being wrongfully punished for something that someone else has done or getting poor grades because you do not have a good teacher. Justice is the recognition and appreciation of persons and giving (back) to them what belongs to them. We can apply this concept of justice to the two major categories of problems:

 **Social justice** is making it possible for all people to live in dignity and realize their full potential through a fair distribution of resources.

 **Ecological justice** is the fair participation of all groups of people in the use and protection of *natural resources*. Natural resources include wood, fields, lakes, mines and so on.

Exercise 3

Compare the two types of justice. What are the differences and similarities between these types of justice? Which do you think Jesus was: a peacemaker or someone who sowed division?

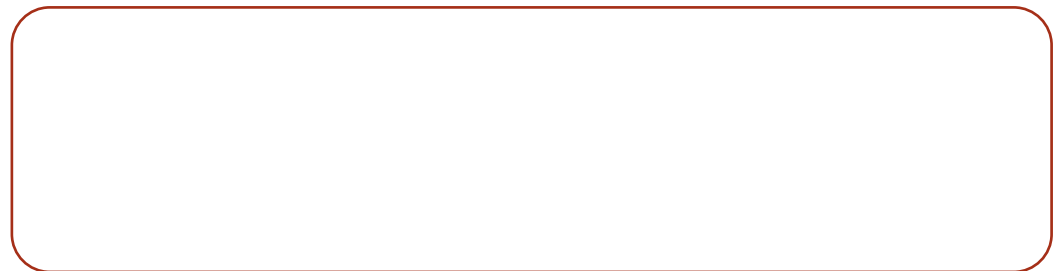


Figure 3.5
Image of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7.
Source: ©geralt / Pixabay

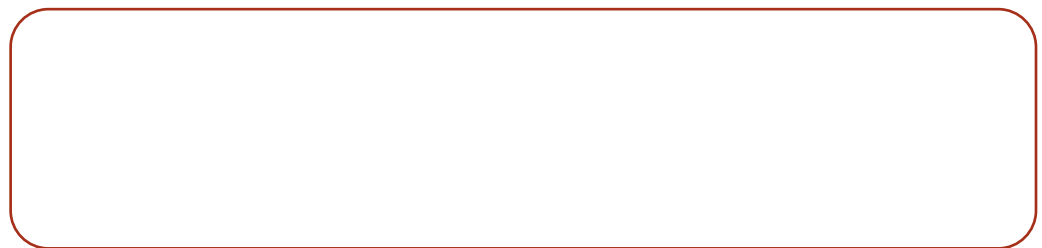
In 2015, the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church wrote that social and ecological justice are inextricably linked. This means that social problems can lead to ecological problems and ecological to social problems. An example of this linkage is a factory that, in order to save money, pollutes a lake, causing the fish in the lake to die. Because of this pollution, the fishermen who earn their money from fishing can no longer catch fish in this lake. As a result, they can no longer buy food for their families.

It is not only Pope Francis who sees the connection between social and ecological problems. Already in 2002, the World Council of Churches called for the integration of social justice with ecological sustainability. In 2015, the Protestant Lausanne Movement called for global poverty and climate change to be tackled jointly.

Christians shouldn't give up hope in this world because of the big problems that exist. On the contrary, there is much that Christians can do in the world. Jesus clearly says that the desire for righteousness is recognized by God (Matthew 5:6). This should not just remain desire but may turn into loving one's neighbor by dedicating oneself to one's neighbor. **Loving** one's neighbor means that one not only cares about social problems but also about ecological problems. After all, these are inextricably connected to each other. **Commitment** to improve the world must therefore be done from a combined social and ecological points of view.

Exercise 4

According to many people, bringing justice into the world is connected with taking care of the earth. How can you contribute both socially and ecologically to bringing justice through your own life?



3.8 GLOSSARY

This glossary from the glossary of the students' book provides more information and interpretation of certain terms. Behind each word, the sections to which it belongs is indicated in brackets.

Context (5)

The context of a text is the environment that determines what a text means. This can be what kind of book a piece of Bible text is part of. In addition, it can be about what is written before or after a Bible text. Finally, context also refers to the historical and cultural world of the author of the Bible text.

Earth (5)

Earth is the name of the planet on which humankind lives. In the Bible, earth stands in contrasts to heaven, because earth is the dwelling place of man and heaven is the dwelling place of God.

Garden of Eden (4)

The garden of Eden is a garden that according to Genesis 2 was created by God. The first people according to one of the two origin story of Genesis, Adam and Eve, originally lived in the garden. After a big mistake they were evicted out of the garden by God and the garden was closed to mankind.

Genesis (4)

Genesis is the first book of the Bible and describes, among others, in two stories the creation of mankind.

Genre (5)

A genre is categorization of texts that have the same kind of structure and style. Different texts differ in form, length and certain word usage. Genres are often flexible, so a text can fall into several genres.

Different genres can be distinguished in modern and ancient texts. Examples of modern genres are thriller, horror and biography. Examples of ancient genres are tragedy, epistle and comedy.

Heaven (5)

The word heaven refers to the place where God dwells. Many people see heaven as the place where people go after their death. This is not what is meant by heaven in the Bible. Heaven stands in contrasts to earth, because heaven is the place of God and earth is the place of man.

Ideal image (5)

An ideal image is an image that someone has of something that is perfect. An ideal image can be about how according to a person the world would be perfect.

Ideology (5)

An ideology is a collection of ideas that someone has about the world, people and what society should look like. An ideology is the basis from which different people imagine a perfect world and make choices in life.

Jerusalem (5)

In the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine. Jerusalem had a temple and many synagogues where Jews came to worship and pray. Today, Jerusalem is still an important city for Jews around the world. Jerusalem is also an important city for Christians and Muslims. In Jerusalem, Jesus was condemned, crucified and buried. Christians also believe he was resurrected here. The apostles first began to tell stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

Justice (6)

Justice means a person receives what this person deserves.

New heaven and new earth (5)

The New Heaven and New Earth is about a vision from the Revelation of John. In this vision, John saw how the world ends and a new earth comes. At the same time, he also saw a new heaven from which a new Jerusalem descended on the new earth.

Revelation (5)

A revelation is a way in which God reveals something about Himself to people.

Revelation of John (5)

The Revelation of John is the title of the last book of the Bible. According to the book itself, a certain John received visions from Jesus when he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

Satan (4)

Satan is a Hebrew word that means 'opponent'. In the Christian world it has become a proper name for the devil. The devil is a figure who is evil in the form of a personality.

Vision (5)

A vision is a secret or image revealed to a person. Other people cannot perceive this revelation. The experiences of John in the book of Revelation are often described as visions.

3.9 TRANSCRIPT

1 INT STREET

Eva is walking down a street and going into an abandoned building. Sarah is watching from the other side of the street. Eva does not notice Sarah.

2 INT CANTEEN

Sarah and David are standing in line in the canteen of the school. Sarah is holding a phone in her hand and is showing it to David. Behind them Eva is visibly looking at them.

Sarah: Cool isn't it? Look at what I can do with it.

Sarah takes a picture of an object with the phone. Afterward, they step forward to the counter.

David: Wow, that is awesome! You're so lucky. My parents said since my phone is not broken, I do not need a new one.

Sarah: That's a shame!

Sarah and David look at the menu above the counter. Sarah becomes turns angry.

Sarah: Hey, what kind of nonsense is this.

David: What's wrong

Sarah says with a raised voice: Well, this vegan nonsense served here today. I don't like it and I want to have real good food.

Eva: What the hell Sarah. Why do you have to be such a brat?

Sarah: Shut up miss snoop.

Eva: I have to snoop. You are such an uncaring person. You always complain about trivial things, while not paying attention to things you should really care about. Look at how the world we are living in becomes more and more dirty and uninhabitable. Do you want to live in a hellish world?

David: That was really not necessary.

Miss...: Kids, kids

Eva: It is obvious she doesn't care. Look how she paraded with a new phone, while children suffer and even die elsewhere so she can have one.

Sarah: Shut up

Mister shouts: Girls, Girls that's enough. Or there will be consequences.

3 INT Street

Sarah and David are walking down the same street.

David: Pff, what a long day. Why were you so angry with Eva?

Sarah: Well, I think she makes a big deal out of nothing. The Bible tells us this world will one day be replaced by something better, so why not enjoy what we have now.

Sarah sees Eva walking down the street and going into an abandoned building.

Sarah says with a smile on her face: Look, there she is! I am wondering what miss Perfect is doing there every day. Let's follow her.

David: Uhm Sarah, is that a good idea?

Sarah runs to the building and David reluctantly follows her. They enter the building Eva went into.

4 INT ROOM

Sarah and David are in a room. There they find Sarah, a woman, and a child. Eva turns around to look at them.

Eva whispers: Hey, what you... uhm, how did ... Did you follow me?

Sarah: Uhm, yeah, I was...

Eva: You should not have come here.

Sarah whispers: Why not?

You would not care anyway. Just stop bothering us and leave us be?

Sarah: Uhm what? I don't bother anyone. It is you who bothered me this morning. So, just tell me what is going on here?

Eva: I come here every day to help this people. This is Malacia and her mother.

Eva points to the woman and the child.

Eva: They do not have many things to do since her mother cannot find a decent job sadly. We meet at this place to have some fun and I help Malacia learn our language. She struggles at school and I try to help her. I know her from school.

Sarah: Oh, okay but should others like the government not help them? And what does this have to do with me?

Eva is annoyed and says: You really do not understand the real world. That is what I meant this morning when I said you don't care about really important issues.

Sarah raises her voice: What is your problem?

Eva: Shh...

David: Well, she does have a point. You just said you do not care for this world, since you believe it will be replaced by a new one someday

Sarah: Yeah, the Bible tells us there will be a time that a New Heaven and a New Earth will appear and that there will be a New Jerusalem where mankind will live in peace and harmony together with God in their midst.

Eva: Yeah, I know that passage, but what has that to do with these people? Or what about eating meat? Or buying a new phone every year? Do you know what these things can lead to? Come take a moment to look in the eyes of Malacia.

Eva leads Sarah to Malacia. Sarah looks Malacia in the eye. The shot zooms into Malacia's eyes. The shot changes to the girl and the parents standing on a farm field, while the plants around them the plants are turning from green to brown and eventually the goats around them die. Next, we see the little girl and her family in a mine while holding an axe. Then her father walks away and falls dead to ground. Then we see a map where a line is drawn from Democratic Republic of Congo to China. In the next frame, we see new phones being boxed. The last frame is of Sarah looking at her new phone. The images are repeated several times and speeded up.

Finally, the image zooms out back through the eyes into the shot of Sarah looking at the girl.

6 INT ROOM

Sarah: Uhm, what happened? Uhm, what does this mean?

Eva: It means that it does not matter that there will be a new world. Your behavior right now influences the lives of others. Eating meat, for instance, leads to more CO2 emissions, which leads to rising temperatures, which can lead to droughts and thus people leaving their dried out farms to work in violent mines so that metals for phones can be delved. And when they want to leave those mines, they can get shot, just like how Malacia's father was killed.

Sarah: Oh, I did not know that. Is Bible wrong then? What has this to do with me again?Eva: I did not say the Bible is wrong.

Believing and having hope in a new and better world does not mean that you should not care about the present world we live in. It is just that you still can be aware of the problems in our world.

Sarah: Maybe you are right. Sorry, I reacted so harshly to you this morning. I am just... I'm just wondering what to do now.

Eva: You could read again what Jesus says. He says to love our neighbor as ourselves, thus maybe we should also think of the lives of others and of the earth when we making decisions and doing things.

Sarah: Yeah, just like the story of the Good Samaritan I have been thinking of lately. I am going to look in the bible again tonight.

7 INT ROOM

We see Sarah giving clothes and toys to Malacia

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EDUC8 Consortium



This book was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund – Police.

