



The Monarch in Creation

Discussion Guide

for Christian Youth

How to Use this Discussion Guide

Introduction

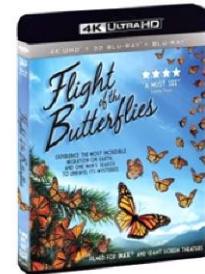
This discussion guide has been developed as a Christian education tool for use after viewing an educational film about monarch butterflies. Several excellent, family-friendly films are available to choose from. [See the side bar for two possibilities.] These high quality films introduce us to the monarch as a wonder of nature, and captivate us with close-up footage of its amazing life cycle and incredible migration. They also inform us of the dramatic decline of this beloved and iconic pollinator due to human activity.

There is no peace more wonderful than the peace we enjoy when faith shows us God in all created things.
Jean-Pierre de Caussade

Intended Outcomes

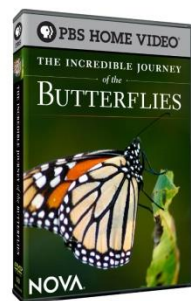
When we contemplate the splendor in creation, we are inspired to recognize the power and goodness of the Creator. This discussion guide is intended to help youth leaders guide their students to discover the appropriate Christian response to the creation that God loves so much. Grounded in Holy Scripture and informed by the writings of theologians across denominations, this guide is designed to heighten students' awareness of:

- the wonder in creation
- the goodness in creation.
- how much God loves the world
- the place of humans in creation



Flight of the Butterflies

Available for purchase at www.FlightoftheButterflies.com



Nova: The Incredible Journey of the Butterflies

Purchase includes AV rights at PBS Teacher Shop

Leader Tips and Advance Preparation

Prayer

Preparation begins with prayer. You may use this prayer or one of your own.

Heavenly Father, Creator of all living things, I pray for your guidance as I prepare to lead my youth group through this film and discussion. Guide me as I study your Holy Word. Inspire me so that I might inspire others to see the beauty and wonder in your creation. Grant me the wisdom and love I need to make a difference in the lives of young people. Amen.

Acquire Permissions

Films are copyright protected. Permissions for showing *Flight of the Butterflies* for educational purposes can be obtained through SK Films by emailing agarcia@skfilms.ca.

PBS educational videos, such as *Nova: The Incredible Journey of the Butterflies*, which are purchased through the PBS Teacher Shop, include AV rights which mean they can be shown for educational purposes. Understand the PBS policy by reading this article on [AV Rights](#)

Review Your Denomination's Views

The following link to the Eco-Justice website provides links to many Christian organizations, their views on environmental issues, and materials available to your congregation for creation care.

<http://www.eco-justice.org/Denom.asp>

Preview the film

It is important to watch the film yourself before you watch with your youth group. These are short films, less than one hour in length. Make notes of your favorite parts to share during the discussion.

- What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- What parts of the film caused you to feel wonder and awe? Compassion?

Make Movie Night a Bring-a-Friend Event!

Review the Discussion Guide

Familiarize yourself with the entire discussion guide, including the Bible verses and the quotations. The more familiar you are with the subject matter, the more effective you will be as the discussion leader.

Recruit Help

You will want to prepare a warm welcome for the youth and their guests who attend the film and discussion event. Recruit adults or outgoing youth ahead of time to serve as greeters and/or ushers. Consider having hot popcorn, other snacks and beverages available. It will be helpful to have nametags for all participants.

You will also want to recruit any technical people necessary to operate the video.

Prepare Materials

Print out a hard copy of the Bible passages in Appendix A, the St. Bonaventure quote, and one or two quotations of your choosing from Appendix B. Cut them apart into individual cards. These will be passed out to volunteers to read during the discussion.

Alternatively, youth can read the passages directly from Bibles and the discussion leader can read the quotations. Another option would be to make PowerPoint slides and read directly from the slides. Encourage youth participation wherever possible.

Invite Others

Encourage this gathering as a "Bring-a-Friend" event for your youth group. Parents and siblings may enjoy the film as well; however, the discussion itself is written to engage junior high and high school students, and would likely not hold the attention of younger children.

Small Gifts

Participants will likely respond positively to the film and will want to do their part for Monarchs. It would be appropriate to send them home with a packet of milkweed seeds to plant in their yard or to share with their neighbor.

Discussion Guide

Before the Film

Welcome

Greet youth and their guests personally as they arrive. Introduce yourself, your pastor, and anyone helping with the film. Thank your audience for coming.

Ask for volunteers who would be willing to read short passages of scripture or short quotes from spiritual leaders during the discussion. [If you are using them, pass out the cards made from Appendix A and B.]

Prayer

Begin your gathering with prayer. You may use this prayer or one of your own.

Almighty God, who brought into existence all that is, we thank you for this time to gather together, to watch this extraordinary film, and to marvel in your wonderful creation. We pray that you would help us to recognize your fingerprints in our world and your continuing presence among us. We ask for your guidance and blessing as we learn about the place you have given us in the world. Open our hearts and minds to receive your wisdom in caring for your creation. Amen.

The Wonder in Creation

Question: Some of you might be wondering why we would show a movie about monarchs here. What do monarchs have to do with the Church? Let's talk about that briefly before we roll the film, and we will return to this question at the end of our discussion today. Many writers of the Bible speak to us about the marvel of God's creation. Let's read a couple short examples.

Bible Verse: In one of the most beautiful Psalms, David writes about creation. Who can read Psalm 104:24?

²⁴ *O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*

Bible Verse: The prophet Isaiah writes of his vision of angels praising God. Who can read Isaiah 6:3?

³ *And one called to another and said:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

Bible Verse: The earth is full of God's creatures and full of his glory. Jesus, Himself, took time to revel in the glory he saw in nature and directed his disciples to do the same. Who can read Luke 12:27?

²⁷ *Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.*

Quote: Jesus tells us to consider the lilies. Some theologians believe this was as much a command as any of Jesus' other commands to us. From the earliest times, there were spiritual leaders in our Church who taught us to follow our Lord's example and study nature for inspiration. Who can read the quote from St. Bonaventure in the 13th century?

"Every creature is by its nature a kind of effigy and likeness of the eternal Wisdom. Therefore, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honour your God."

So let's enjoy this short film about one of God's most astonishing creatures. And then we will return to our discussion.

Roll the Film

[Leader tip: Watch the film again with the group. You will likely notice things you did not notice the first time you watched. Make note of any part of the film that gets a strong reaction from the audience.]

Discussion Guide (Continued)

After the Film

Conversation Starter

Question: What was your favorite part of the film?

Question: How is God revealed in the monarch butterfly?

Question: Monarchs are pretty incredible, but do the writers of the Bible ever acknowledge bugs as part of God's creation?

Bible Verse: The writer of Psalm 50 speaks with the voice of God. Who can read Psalm 50:10-11?

¹⁰ *For every wild animal of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.*

¹¹ *I know all the birds of the air,
and all that moves in the field is mine.*

Question: "All that moves in the field is mine." What do you think might be moving in that field?

Bible Verse: The writer of Psalm 148 describes all of Creation praising God. Who can read Psalm 148 verses 7-12?

⁷ *Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,*

⁸ *fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!*

⁹ *Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!*

¹⁰ *Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!*

¹¹ *Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!*

¹² *Young men and women alike,
old and young together!*

Questions: In this Psalm the "creeping things" are joining all other living things on earth in praising God. What do you think "creeping things" are?

Questions: How do bugs praise God? How do insects make the earth full of God's glory?

Creation is Good

Question: In the very familiar story of creation in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, God creates the heavens, the earth, the light, the sky, the land, the

seas, plants of every kind, the sun, the moon, the stars, living creatures of every kind including us. Seven times in this story God saw that what he made was "good." Why do you think God said His creation was good seven times? [Leader tip: Seven is the number of completeness in the Bible.]

Bible Verse: Let's read part of that chapter. Who can read Genesis 1:24-25 and 31 for me?

²⁴ *And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.*

³¹ *God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good...*

Question: Did you catch the part about creeping things? What do you conclude God thinks of His monarch butterfly creation?

God Loves the World

Bible Verse: John 3:16 is a favorite bible verse for many people. Who can read John 3:16-17 for me?

¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

¹⁷ *Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

Questions: How many of you have heard or seen these verses before? In the original Greek language, the word that we translate as "world" is *cosmos*. For God so loved the *cosmos*. Does that change your understanding of the verse?

Bible Verse: Let's read something the Apostle Paul writes about Jesus. Who can read Colossians 1:19-20?

¹⁹ *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

Question: This verse says that because Jesus died on the cross, God was reconciled to "all things." What do you think is included in all things?

Discussion Guide (Continued)

The Place of Humans in Creation

Question: Finally, let's talk about human beings. In the beginning, God gave us one job. Does anyone know what that one job was?

Bible Verse: Who can read Genesis 2:7-8 and 15?

⁷ Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Questions: Does that mean that God wanted us all to be farmers?

Question: The Hebrew words *abad* and *shamar*, which we translate as "till" and "keep" are used in several other parts of the Bible where they mean "serve" and "protect or preserve." So what was mankind's one job?

Question: I have one last point to discuss. In the book of Genesis chapters 6-9 we are told the story of the great flood. In this story God gave Noah and his family the job of saving endangered creatures by building an ark. Raise your hand if you know this story.

Question: At the end of this story, after the flood, when destruction is over and creation is beginning again, we are told that God established a covenant. And he puts a rainbow in the sky as a sign of this covenant. Who knows what a covenant is? [Leader tip: a covenant is a legal contract or an agreement.]

Bible Verse: In this familiar Bible story that we all know, God makes clear that He establishes His covenant, His legal contract, not only with Noah and his family, but with *every living thing*. And He repeats this covenant *seven* times in ten verses. Let's read the last four verses. Who can read Genesis 9:14-17?

¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the

clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Question: Who did God establish his covenant with?

Question: Why did God repeat the covenant between Him, Noah and every living creature seven times?

Quotations from Spiritual Leaders

Let's hear a few closing words from our spiritual leaders. [Leader should read, or ask volunteers to read, one or two quotes chosen from Appendix B.]

Question: One final question. The North American monarch butterfly is in a dramatic population decline much of which is due to human activity. What do you think the response of the Church should be?

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, We thank you for this world that you love and all of its inhabitants, including things that creep and fly. Help us to know how to till and keep the earth, how to appreciate the miracles in front of us, and how to treat your creation with love and justice. Amen.

Small Gifts:

Distribute the milkweed seed packets or other small gift to your participants should you choose to do so.

Appendix A

<p>Luke 12:27 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.</i></p>	<p>Psalms 104:24 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.</i></p>
<p>Psalms 50:10-11 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>¹⁰ For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 6:3 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."</i></p>
<p>John 3:16-17 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.</i></p>	<p>Colossians 1:19-20 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.</i></p>
<p>Genesis 2:7-8 and 15 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>⁷ Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.</i></p>	<p>Genesis 1:24-25 and 31 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good...</i></p>
<p>Psalms 148:7-12 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, ⁸ fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command! ⁹ Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! ¹⁰ Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! ¹² Young men and women alike, old and young together!</i></p>	<p>Genesis 9: 14-17 (NRSV)</p> <p><i>¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."</i></p>

Appendix B

(Choose one or more quotes in addition to the St. Bonaventure quote)

<p>Every creature is by its nature a kind of effigy and likeness of the eternal Wisdom. Therefore, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honour your God.</p> <p>St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), Italian theologian and philosopher</p>	<p>But we are beginning to see through God’s wonderful works in His creations, even in a small flower, how powerful and good God is. Therefore, we glorify and praise Him; we give Him thanks and acknowledge in His creation the power of His Works.</p> <p>Martin Luther (1483-1546), Leader of Protestant Reformation</p>
<p>The creation is quite like a spacious and splendid house, provided and filled with the most exquisite and the most abundant furnishings. Everything in it tells us of God.</p> <p>John Calvin (1509-1564), Presbyterian, Reformed, Congregational</p>	<p>I believe in my heart that faith in Jesus Christ can and will lead us beyond an exclusive concern for the well-being of other human beings to the broader concern for the well-being of the birds in our backyards, the fish in our rivers, and every living creature on the face of the earth.</p> <p>John Wesley (1703-1791), Founder of the Methodist Church</p>
<p>It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God has made the entire world just for human beings, or to suppose that God is interested in only one of the millions of species that inhabit God’s good earth. Our dominion over animals is not supposed to be despotism. We are made in the image of God, yes, but God – in whose image we are made – is holy, loving, and just. We do not honour God by abusing other sentient creatures.</p> <p>Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931-), South African, Anglican cleric</p>	<p>It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.</p> <p>Pope Francis (1936-) Present Leader of the Catholic Church</p>
<p>The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security and joy toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.</p> <p>Walter Brueggemann (1933-) United Church of Christ</p>	<p>The community of faith cannot be silent any longer. We must speak out and proclaim that all unrighteousness is sin. It is unrighteous to denude the forest, to pollute the air, and to squander the richness of the earth. Creation does not belong to humans; it is God's property. Therefore, to disrespect God's authority and ownership is to commit both the sin of disobedience and the sin of rebellion.</p> <p>Bishop George D. McKinney, Jr. (1932-) Church of God in Christ</p>

Appendix B (Continued)

<p>In biblical Christianity, the value of creatures derives ultimately not from their utility, market price, cuteness, or charm. Instead, their value derives from their Creator. All things owe their life and breath to the Creator who not only has created them and declared them good but also sustains them through divine love and power.</p> <p>Calvin B. DeWitt Christian Reformed Church</p>	<p>We are called to assist the earth, to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own -- indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty, and wonder.</p> <p>Wangari Maathai (1940-2011) Kenyan Environmentalist</p>
<p>When we reduce the spiritual or religious life to ourselves (to our concerns, to our needs, and to our interests), then we forget the calling of the Church to implore God -- always and everywhere -- for the salvation of the whole polluted cosmos, to the least of our brothers and sisters, and the last speck of dust in the universe.</p> <p>Fr. John Chryssavgis (1958-) Greek Orthodox</p>	<p>We are 'un-creating.' We -- or rather -- some of us -- have become the 'uncreators.' One young dangerous species has become a threat to Earth's life-generating capacity. <i>Homo sapiens</i> are using and degrading the planet's natural goods at a rate that Earth's ecosystems cannot sustain.</p> <p>Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda (1954-) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</p>
<p>Reading about nature is fine, but if a person walks in the woods and listens carefully, he can learn more than what is in books, for they speak with the voice of God.</p> <p>George Washington Carver (1864-1943) American Scientist</p>	<p>We affirm that the world, as God's handiwork, has its own inherent integrity; that land, waters, air, forests, mountains and creatures, including humanity, are 'good' in God's sight.</p> <p>World Council of Churches</p>

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