

Unit 5 - The world (Christianity & Buddhism)

Key concepts

Creation

Creation means making something unique, deliberately for a purpose. Christians believe that God created the world and everything in it.

Soul

The soul is the part of humans which allows people to relate to God. The part of humans that will live on after the body has died. A reflection of 'the image of God' in human beings. That part of human nature that is not just physical.

Humanity

Compassion, kindness, benevolence and care about other human beings.

Stewardship

Carefully looking after something that is not your own. To look after, and care for the world. A God given responsibility to look after and preserve the world for future generations.

What makes us human?

- We have bodies that grow, help us live and move.
- We have minds to think and decide.
- We have personalities that make us different from other people.

- We have emotions through which we react
- We also have experiences and influences that affects the kind of people we are and the decisions we make.

People use many reasons to explain why they exist. One main common reason given is to care for each other and for the planet.

All religions teach that human beings are unique and different from all other animals.

There are three reasons for this:

- 1) **Intelligence** - Humans have the ability to think and reflect; to apply knowledge and learning; to reason.
- 2) **Morality** - Humans have a sense of right and wrong; values.
- 3) **Language** - Humans have the ability to write/read/speak/communicate different languages.

Christians would also add:

- 4) **Revelation** - Humans have been created in God's image; capable of religious behaviour and beliefs; having a conscience; in possession of a 'soul'.

Christians believe that our purpose and responsibilities in life are:

- To enjoy the garden/world and its fruits/resources. (genesis 1:16).
- To obey God - 'you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil'. (Genesis 1:17)
- Stewardship of the earth (to look after it for God), 'Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea...' (Genesis 1:26).
- To have sexual relationships and children, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28)

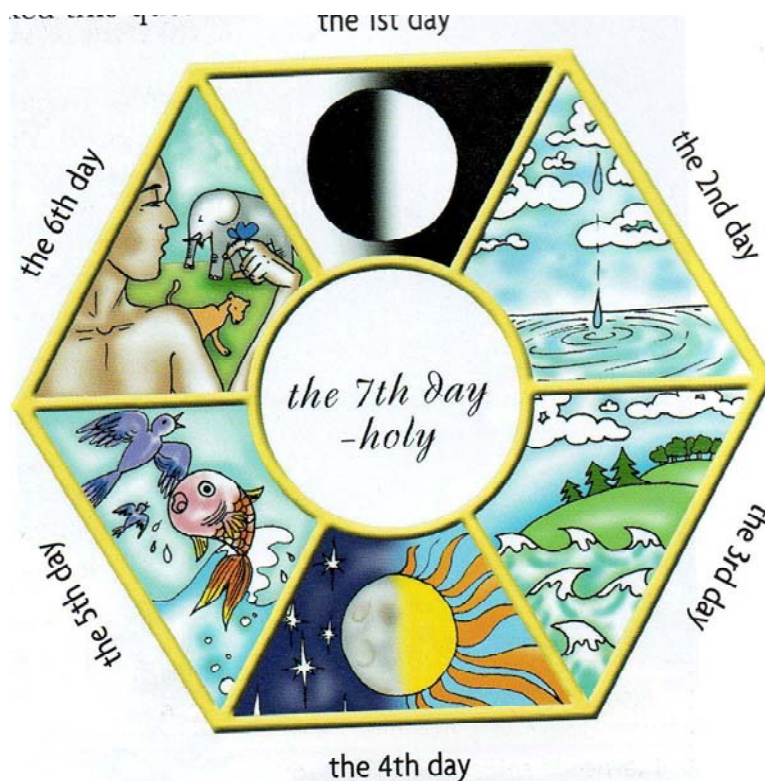
- To serve God and live for him. (This includes telling others about and sharing one's faith), 'Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength' (Mark 12:30)
- To live in harmony with others, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31).

How did the world begin?

The creation story can be found in the Genesis chapter 1 and 2. In the story it is very clear that God created everything that is in the heavens and the earth:

- Light and dark
- Sun, moons, stars.
- Day and night.
- All kinds of living creatures
- Time and seasons
- Human beings
- Land sea and sky.

All these were created in 'six days', and on the seventh day God rested



Some Christians believe that the creation reported in *Genesis* happened exactly as written. They believe that God's spirit moved across the waters, that there were six days of 24 hours in which God created, Adam was formed out of the dust of the earth and that Eve was formed out of Adam's rib.

The Christians who believe this version, of the creation are called fundamental or literalist Christians. Their views tend to clash and conflict with science. They believe that everything in the Bible happened exactly as it has been written.

Other Christians take a less literal view. They focus on the belief that God created the world, but do not worry too much about the details of how it was created. They have an understanding that God did create the world, and that he used the natural processes he created, and that there were clear 'periods' of creation, though not 24 hour as such. This view eliminates the conflict between religion and science, because they understand how religion and science weave together to give a full picture of life and the earth. These Christians are called conservative Christians.

Whatever views a Christian takes, there is a common belief that:

- God created everything for a purpose.
- The beginning of the world and of life was not accidental.
- Human beings are different from other creatures, in being in the 'image of God', and sharing some responsibility for the world.
- That the world created was basically good.

When it comes to creation, science and religion are both asking questions about the world and life; they are however different kinds of questions.

For example:

Science asks **HOW** questions.

Religion asks WHY questions.

Buddhist views

The Buddha did not try to answer questions about whether God exists or how the world was created. He was only concerned with the causes of suffering and the way to stop suffering.

Buddhists believe that the world must have been created, but are not concerned about the details, because they believe that everything is impermanent, constantly changing. The ultimate aim for each Buddhist is to gain enlightenment. They believe they can do this by concentrating on the teachings of the buddha, which try to explain how to eliminate suffering. Only by doing this can the cycle of life, death and rebirth stop. (samsara).

(For more info see unit 3).

How should we care for the world?

Key word

Dominion - this means 'kingship' or being the 'boss over something'. The bible story of creation says humans were given 'dominion' over the world and its creatures. This means being in care of the world for God.

Some people in the past have felt that our 'dominion' over the world and other animals gave them the right to exploit the world and all that's in it for their own personal advantage.

For many years humans have plundered the world and the environment, and are now beginning to recognise the importance of responsible management of the earth's resources and its environment.

Christian Views

Christians would say that if humans live sensibly and in true partnership with God and his creation, then they find that nature itself responds and people come closer to God as they praise him for all he has provided.

Christians try to remind themselves that God did not only create the world in the beginning, but that his hand is still at work in the natural cycle of the world and its seasons.

So they remind themselves regularly, in worship and celebrations of God's provisions and their own responsibilities too. E.g. harvest thanksgiving; grace before meals.

There are many organisations and individuals who work to protect the earth. Many humans, because of religious and moral teachings, feel they have a responsibility to care for the earth and the environment, especially as we have dominion.

Christians use the term **stewardship** to explain this responsibility.

As stewards we should try our best to preserve the world's environment and resources for future generations and for God. Christians believe that every person is unique and has been given unique talents from God. It is our duty to use these talents in order to use the world's resources productively without causing damage to

the world, without destroying renewable resources and with every effort to preserve what we have been given.

The talents include knowledge about the world and its environment, and the skills required in order to be stewards.

An example of a Christian steward:

CHICO MENDES

Situation: In Brazil there had been environmental problems. Huge hardwood trees were being chopped down to make furniture and buildings. Mercury was being used to help separate the gold from the land. This had another effect of polluting the water, and so killing the fish and anyone drinking the water. Rain forests were being burnt down to make space for crops and livestock. After three years the land had become exhausted, barren, and then become abandoned. Many people living there just wanted the area to be left alone.

Who was Chico Mendes?

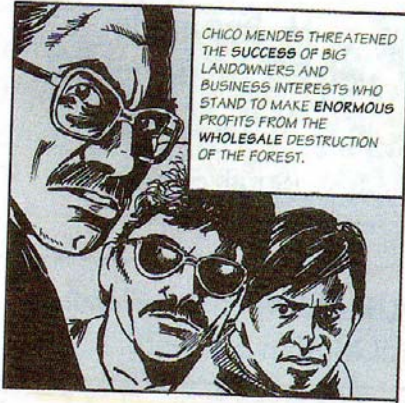
Chico was a leader of the rubber tappers. He had been a rubber tapper since the age of nine years. As a rubber tapper he had not been able to go to school. Later in his life he organised the rubber tappers to defend their homes from cattle ranchers. From the 1970s he organised non-violent resistance to the exploitation of the forests. He found ways to use Amazonian resources to support the



economic benefit for the local people and to protect the rainforest from logging and cattle ranching.

In 1988 he led a winning effort to stop cattle ranchers from deforesting an area the rubber tappers wanted to make into a reserve.

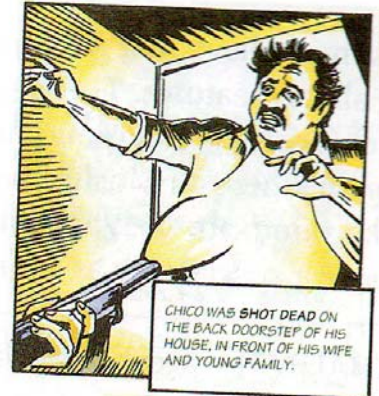




CHICO MENDES THREATENED THE SUCCESS OF BIG LANDOWNERS AND BUSINESS INTERESTS WHO STAND TO MAKE ENORMOUS PROFITS FROM THE WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION OF THE FOREST.

He was killed outside his house later that year by the son of a cattle rancher.

In his memory, the land he lived and died for – the 970,570,000 hectares – was named the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve.



CHICO WAS SHOT DEAD ON THE BACK DOORSTEP OF HIS HOUSE, IN FRONT OF HIS WIFE AND YOUNG FAMILY.