Questions for Further Thought or Discussion

**Introduction**
1. The Sleeths’ spiritual and environmental journey began with a transformational conversation on a star-lit night, immersed in God’s creation. Describe a time when you felt close to God while out in nature.

2. Read Nancy’s prayer on page xix. Write or say a prayer asking for forgiveness for our transgressions and God’s help in becoming a better steward of his creation.

**Chapter 1, Home**
1. Name a few actions your family has already taken to help care for the God’s creation.

2. Nancy describes creation care as a journey. No matter where we are on that journey, we can all do better each year. Conduct the energy audit found on page 402. What is your goal for next year?

3. Throughout the chapter, Nancy describes many ways that you can start becoming a better steward around the house and in the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, family room, laundry room, trash and recycling area, basement, attic, and garage. Which area of the house seems like a good place for you to start? Or, would it be best for members of your family to each take responsibility for one area?

4. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 56-57 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year. Select a partner to help keep you accountable.

**Chapter 2, Lawn and Garden**
1. Read the quote (green typeface) about tree planting on page 62. Describe a special tree in your life.

2. How could you help plant trees for future generations? (See www.blessedearth.org/treeplanting for ideas.)

3. On page 76, Nancy says that food travels an average of 1,500 miles to reach our plates. What are some food products that you could grow or purchase closer to home?
4. What lessons can working outdoors or growing some of our own food teach us (and our children)?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 87-88 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Chapter 3, Work
1. On pages 91-93, Nancy talks about different places she has worked. Describe the first place you worked. How was it better or worse for the environment than your current workplace?

2. How many pieces of paper do you estimate you go through in one work week? How could you reduce that amount?

3. Nancy discusses the impact of office food and coffee on pages 103-106. Make a list of ways you could reduce the environmental impact of the food and beverages you consume while you’re at work; pick one action you can start this week.

4. On pages 108-109, Nancy suggests ways to make less pollution while commuting. How are you already making an effort to commute efficiently? Are there any suggestions you can implement to reduce the impact of your work travel even more?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 118-119 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Chapter 4, Transportation
1. How can you increase your use of alternative forms of transportation—walking, biking, riding the bus or subway—in your daily routine? What first steps should you take to increase the likelihood of you implementing such changes?

2. Were there any suggestions in this chapter (checking tire pressure, driving slower, going to a car wash that recycles water, etc.) that you could take to make your car use more efficient?

3. Nancy suggests staying close to home when vacationing as a way of going green and saving money. What local attractions or state parks could you visit for your next vacation?
4. On page 140, Nancy lists some of the good side effects of higher gas prices. When was the last time that gas prices increased dramatically? How did the change affect your driving habits?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 153-154 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Chapter 5, Food
1. In what ways are personal nutrition and the health of the planet related?

2. On pages 176-177, Nancy talks about the excessive amount of food that is thrown away by Americans every year. What changes could you make to decrease the amount of waste produced from your family’s meals?

3. What foods are grown in your area? Where can you shop to get locally grown food?

4. On pages 178-179, Nancy suggests eating at locally owned eateries instead of fast food joints. What local restaurants (preferably ones that don’t use disposable products) can you support?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 185-186 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Chapter 6, Sabbath
1. Why do you think God ordained a day of rest? How does the disregard of Sabbath affect society?

2. How can honoring the Sabbath contribute to our stewardship of God’s creation?

3. On page 192, Nancy shares how her family observed the Sabbath when she was growing up. Did your family keep the Sabbath when you were a child? What did they do to set the day apart?

4. Do you regularly observe the Sabbath now? How?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 215-216 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Chapter 7, Holidays and Special Events
1. What actions can you take to reduce the stress, waste, and expenses of your yearly Christmas celebrations and make the holiday more about worship?

2. Nancy encourages us to give practical gifts like travel mugs, handkerchiefs, and organic treats (p. 227). What practical gifts can you give that can help your friends and family reduce their environmental impact? What can you ask (or not ask) for next Christmas or birthday to reduce the environmental impact of your celebration?

3. On page 237, Nancy talks about giving something up for lent—a practice that can be good for our environmental footprints and wallets as well as our spiritual walks. Is there something you consume too much of (media, coffee, gasoline, meat, etc.) that you could give up this year?

4. Our society has made many special days (Thanksgiving, Valentine’s Day, weddings, Easter) more about the trappings than the spirit of the holiday. What can you do to resist consuming and instead center these days on love and giving thanks?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 257-258 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Chapter 8, Entertainment

1. In this chapter, Nancy talks about the amount of time Americans spend watching TV. How much time do you spend watching television or movies each week? What else could you be doing with that time? (Check out p. 267 for a list of ideas.)

2. Many people feel like they can’t live without their cellphones, computers, iPods, and other electronic gadgets. Are there any pieces of technology that you depend on too much?

3. Some of Nancy’s favorite pastimes are walking, reading, listening to music, having friends over, and spending time with her family. What are some activities you enjoy that require little or no resources?

4. Sports and fitness can be costly, both for our wallets and for the environment. On page 290, Nancy suggests getting exercise by gardening or going on hikes instead of hitting the gym. What other ways could your family save money and protect the environment while enjoying sports and staying healthy?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 297-298 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.
**Chapter 9, Schools**

1. On page 305, Nancy suggests joining or forming a green team at a local school. Do you know of any area schools that have an environmental task force? Which schools could use some extra help getting started on their environmental journey?

2. On page 316, Nancy talks about the impact of childhood asthma. Does your child’s classroom have plants to improve the indoor air quality? If you don’t have any students in your household, do you know any teachers you could donate a plant to for their classroom?

3. Just because you’re not a teacher doesn’t mean you can’t teach! What aspect of the environment are you an expert on (gardening, green building practices, waste management, etc.)? How could you volunteer at a local school to teach students about your area of expertise? If you are a teacher, how could you incorporate environmental education into your curriculum?

4. On page 326, Nancy suggests a few ways that schools can celebrate Earth Day. How could you help a local school care for the planet this April?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 330-331 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

**Chapter 10, Church**

1. Is creation care something you hear about at your church or is the subject largely neglected? Nancy suggests several ways you can encourage your congregation to learn about biblical stewardship, from starting a small group to writing a column for your church newsletter. How could you help get the conversation started?

2. In what ways could the efficiency of your church building be increased? Who can you talk to or what can you do to make sure these changes happen?

3. From carpooling to buying compact fluorescent light bulbs in bulk and sharing with others, going green is easier when you’re doing it in community. How can you work together with your church friends to take your green efforts to the next level?

4. Does your church currently celebrate Earth Day? What can you do to help your congregation remember to thank God for his creation this April?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 364-365 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.
Chapter 11, Community

1. On page 373, Nancy suggests joining a community-based environmental group. What groups in your town (gardening, community supported agriculture, outdoor adventure, biking or hiking, etc.) would like to know more about?

2. Moving can cost a lot—environmentally, financially, and relationally. How many times have you moved during your life? How has moving (or staying put) affected your sense of community?

3. What independent stores can you support? How can buying locally help both the environment and your area’s economy?

4. Nancy suggests several ways to get involved in your local environmental scene, from letter-writing campaigns to cleaning up litter in your town park. How can you show your support for the environment in your community?

5. Commit to at least one item from the lists on pages 399-400 (or substitute one action of your own) for this day, this week, this month, and this year.

Stay in touch with Nancy through the Blessed Earth monthly newsletter. Sign up at contact@blessedearth.org.