

Discussion Guide for Eco-Suite

The play, Eco-Suite, offers a series of presentations and skits, many of which can stand alone and be presented for different kinds of events and audiences. Aside from staging the play, a possible way is to read certain scenes out loud in churches, synagogues, and environmental groups to explore the impact of climate change or environmental degradation. This kind of “readers theater” requires little preparation and is especially helpful for working through a topic which may cause anger, grief, and helplessness regarding the threats awaiting all of us in the future. The discussion guide below allows the audience and the players to enter into dialogue after the reading or after a performance. Viewers and participants will have the option to work through feelings, explore their faith and convictions, and perhaps deliberate what kind of actions they can take together to help the planet and each other.

OVERVIEW OF SCENES

1. Group gathering and practicing the theme song
2. The three Prophets: doom, carpe diem, and action
3. Excuses, excuses: dismissing the climate crisis
4. Carbon footprint skit
5. We are all complicit
6. Visions of a bleak future
7. Life Points skit
8. Gabriel / Lucifer debate
9. Delving into grief
10. Voices of admonishment and hope
11. Genesis revisited: Re-Creation

Suggestions for Discussing Each Scene of Eco-Suite

SCENE 1: Group gathering and theme song

1. The refrain suggests that the world as we know it may not last. Do you gain hope as you experience the sunrise each morning? What other things give you hope?
2. Verse 1 starts with a deep sense of security and fear. Then it ends with a prayer to have these fears dispelled. Does your heart “cry and tremble” when you consider the damage already done to our planet?
3. Is the expression “sisters of the earth” appropriate? If so, how? And how are we called to behave as such?

SCENE 2: The three Prophets

1. Do you think all three prophets make valid points?

2. Which speaker do you feel closest to, and why?
3. Where would you say are the people you know in terms of preaching doom, carpe diem, or action? How is the environmental question handled these days a) in your family, b) in your neighborhood, c) in the nation, d) in the world?

SCENE 3: Excuses, excuses: dismissing the climate crisis

1. Have you heard all five arguments? Which one is the loudest?
2. How do you react when you hear it?
3. What are some helpful suggestions for entering into dialogue with people who disagree with you?

SCENE 4: Carbon footprint skit

1. Have you taken the carbon footprint test online? If so, what did you find out?
2. Is it helpful to do this kind of personal inventory?
3. Can individuals make an impact, and if so, how?
4. Whom do you see as major culprits regarding the environmental crisis? How should they be held accountable?
5. Do you feel a responsibility to tell others about your climate concerns? What happens if you bring up the subject?

SCENE 5: We are all complicit

1. Consider the statement, "There is a piece of coal and a drop of oil in each hurricane and in all of us." Are we equally culpable?
2. Explain the truth of the sentence from a scientific point of view.
3. What does it mean on a spiritual level?
4. Given the crisis, is it justifiable to focus on "our gadgets or on our next vacation"?

SCENE 6: Visions of a bleak future

1. The Chorus introduces the idea that future generations will hold us accountable and condemn us for what we did or did not do. Do you agree?
2. The second Chorus poem depicts our world in about 100 years. Is it a realistic scene? How do you picture the world then in view of what is happening right now?

SCENE 7: Life Points skit

1. The skit is a parody of greed and consumption. What do you see as signs of excesses in our modern world? What should we seek to confess?
2. In what ways have you already "felt the heat," i.e. been impacted by climate change?
3. Is the "game" comparison appropriate?

4. Can people be persuaded to consume less? Give some examples of success stories and positive change.

SCENE 8: Gabriel / Lucifer debate

1. Where do you see / seek / find God in creation?
2. If we destroy the environment, where is God in your opinion? Suffering? Tolerating? Forgiving? Uninvolved?
3. Do you think that the God-given ability of humans to choose was a mistake?
4. Do you see God as active or passive in our current struggles? How does it manifest?
5. How does your faith or spirituality impact what you do?

SCENE 9: Delving into grief

1. The actor Blake mentions a suicide that occurred in his school. Do you think the environmental disruption can lead to that kind of deep despair? What can we do to prevent depression, especially in the young?
2. The second part of the poem, introduced by Merrill, takes a look at our planet from outer space. Do you agree that someone looking at us from that perspective would marvel at our willingness to self-destruct?
3. "Good planets are hard to find." Should we explore outer space or clean up the space we have? Can we do both?

SCENE 10: Voices of admonishment and hope

1. Choose your favorite statement among the ones that were read. Why do you agree with it? Why and how does it inspire you?
2. Have you read other authors or seen other quotes that have lifted you up and energized you to become an environmental activist?
3. How do you feel called to get involved specifically?

SCENE 11: Genesis revisited. Re-Creation

1. The Re-Creation poem follows the seven days of creation described in Genesis Chapter 1. It is full of determination to follow our calling to be caretakers of our earth garden. Share your reaction.
2. In a recent video on YouTube, Matthew Dowd spells GOD in such a way that the middle letter is an emoji, a picture of our blue planet. When we become allies of the earth, are we also allies of God?
3. Amanda Gorman's poem evokes a future of being healed, awakened, and unified in our purpose. Do you think we will get there?
4. The quote from Deuteronomy goes back to the idea of choice. Can we make good choices without having to feel that it is all up to us?