

Recommended Stewardship Resource

Serve God, Save the Planet

Dr. Matthew Sleeth

Serve God, Save the Planet combines an inspiring personal story with a compelling call to action. The book aims to challenge those who love God to also love His creation, and it accomplishes that goal by rooting its message in timeless biblical themes of lifestyle stewardship, personal responsibility, and compassion for others.

Strengths:

- One of the most compelling features of this book is the testimony of the author. Dr. Matthew Sleeth was living the American Dream as the chief of medical staff at a New England hospital. The chronic suffering of patients combined with uneasiness with his own lifestyle led Dr. Sleeth to give away more than half of what his family once owned in order to "serve God and save the planet."
- The book presents an honest and consistent spiritual quest, challenging readers to ask, "Will this (action, behavior, lifestyle choice, etc.) bring me closer to God?"
- *Serve God, Save the Planet* gracefully challenges America's consumer lifestyle, pointing out how it "demands an enormous amount of work, worry, struggle" and yet "instills a deep sense of longing and discontent." Drawing from his own family's struggles in this area, Sleeth writes, "We were going about life as though we were the center of the universe."
- Sleeth is very practical and repeats the point that it is not enough to simply agree there is a problem, but rather insists that belief must translate into action.
- Sleeth addresses the common perception that a concern for creation results in less concern for people or eternity. He points out that the most important change needed is a change of heart, acknowledging that although lifestyle changes will not earn our way into heaven, they do connect us with the family of humanity around the globe and brings us closer to God.
- Rather than prescribing a legalistic list of "dos" and "don'ts", Sleeth instead weaves numerous "anonymous humble actions" that his family has adopted such as turning off lights, hanging clothes on the line, bicycling to work, etc.
- *Serve God Save the Planet* includes a number of helpful resources in the Appendix: reflection questions for each chapter (useful for personal or group study), Energy Audit, Appliance Guide, Creation Care insights from historical Christian leaders (i.e. Calvin, Luther, etc.), and an interesting "Earth Care To-Do List" with suggested prayers and simple action steps that can be implemented daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly.

Things to be aware of:

- The book builds its case, in part, on several unsubstantiated statistics (i.e. one acre of forests are destroyed worldwide every second, one hundred species become extinct every day, American consumption of fast-food hamburgers increases the size of the Sahara desert and creates more starvation in Africa, etc.). Sleeth is a competent and credible author, but the lack of citations may cause some readers to throw the baby out with the bathwater.
- Although the stories and solutions presented in the book are engaging, the premise of the book may seem sensational to some: "the earth is on the verge of ecological collapse, and we are the cause." (p.11)

Published by Zondervan (www.zondervan.com)



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