



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

Eating Mercifully

The Humane Society of the United States

Video Discussion Guide for Adults

Ice Breaker

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

1. Do you have a pet? What kind of pets have you had and what role do they play in your life?
or
2. Do you know any farmers? How would you describe a good farmer?

Video: A 7-minute clip of *Eating Mercifully* is available online at humanesociety.org/faith. A full length version can be ordered at faith@humanesociety.org. We suggest the small group leader watch the movie prior to sharing it with the group.

Discussion Questions

1. According to this video, where does most of our meat, dairy and eggs come from?
2. How has farming changed over the past sixty years?
3. What is the difference between treating an animal as a commodity or production unit and an animal as a living creature?
4. What part of this video surprised you the most?
5. Which person's argument did you find most convincing? Least convincing? Why?

- Robert Martin, Executive Director of Pew Commission
- Dr. Laura Hobgood-Oster, Professor of Animals and Religion, Southwestern University
- Elaine and Dale West, Rooterville Animal Sanctuary
- Pastor Greg Boyd, Woodland Hills Church
- Sister Rosemarie Greco, DW

Quotes

Read through the following quotes then choose one that stands out to you. Share with the group the quote and a reason why it stands out.

"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."

– John Wesley

"When man diverted from the path [of goodness] the animals followed him...If man now would rise to his original nature and would not do evil any longer, then the animals too would return to their original gentle nature."

– Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (CE 150)

"Not to hurt our humble brethren [the animals] is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission: to be of service to them whenever they require it."

– Francis of Assisi, (1181-1226)

"Anyone who has accustomed himself to regard the life of any living creature as worthless is in danger of arriving also at the idea of worthless human lives."

- Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)

"When we sin as the image bearers of God, we are saying to the whole creation, to all of nature under our dominion, to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field: "This is how God is. This is how your Creator behaves. Look in the mirror; look at us, and you will see the character of God Almighty."

– R.C. Sproul

"If there is no element of asceticism in our lives, if we give free rein to the desires of the flesh...we shall find it hard to train for the service of Christ."

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Scripture

Read Genesis 1:1, 20-31, 2:1-3.

- What does this passage say?
- What living things are named?
- How are the living things described?
- What do we learn about God from this passage?
- What did God do on the seventh day?
- What do we learn about humans from this passage? How about animals?
- What does this first chapter of Genesis say about food?

Read Genesis 2:15-22.

- In this passage, what does God tell the first human?
- What work does God do in this passage?
- What work does Adam do in this passage?
- In this passage, God recognizes that it isn't good for Adam to be left alone. How does God respond to Adam's need for companionship?

Read Exodus 23:12, Deuteronomy 5:14, Matthew 12:9-14, and Proverbs 12:10

- Who is to rest on the Sabbath?
- What is a purpose of the Sabbath?
- How does a righteous person act?

Closing Discussions

- In Scripture we learn how God gave humans dominion over the animals. What do you think this dominion should look like? How do humans show dominion today? How could this change?
- How has the combination of our study of Scripture, review of quotes from Christians, and watching this video changed your perspective?
- Throughout the video Dale and Elaine West made connections between their faith and their calling to care for animals. As Christians, should our eating habits be different from the rest of the world? How?

Take Home

We have vast power over animals, and with such power comes great responsibility. We can choose to be kind and merciful or cruel and abusive. You can celebrate God's creatures and serve your community. Coming in 2010 from The HSUS, *The Animal Ministry Guide* features a variety of ways faith communities can help animals.

In the guide, meet churches around the country that provide free veterinary care for underserved communities; include pet food in food drives, designate church grounds as wildlife sanctuaries, host adoption events and promote spay/neuter awareness after worship services, and more. There are opportunities for everyone – Individuals, small groups and congregations – in the *Animal Ministry Guide*.

Learn more and sign up online for more information about *The Animal Ministry Guide* at

www.humanesociety.org/faith

Prayer

Creator, You are God to all, You have compassion on all you have made (Psalm 145:9). Thank You for giving us life and for creating a world full of life. Help us to show respect and care towards all of Your creation. Help us also to live our lives in such a way that we will help others to see the value of all living things, so that one day everything that has breath will praise You Lord (Psalm 150:6). Amen.

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For more about The HSUS Faith Outreach program, including additional resources, videos, and our e-newsletter, *The Humane Steward*, visit **www.humanesociety.org/faith**.