

If a Tree Falls...

Educational and promotional readings
New Community Project

Reading One

There's nothing much more important to life on earth than trees. Think about it—what do trees provide for the earth and its people? (give a chance for group to respond—possible benefits are cleaning the air, providing oxygen, homes for creatures, regulate rainfall, stop soil erosion, provide fruit and wood products, create forests which are homes to millions of native people and most of the world's biodiversity, kids to climb in) There are trees in the rainforest that have their own species of beetle—that bug only lives in that tree. So what happens if that tree is cut down? That beetle becomes extinct—gone forever. Trees also sometimes contain medicinal properties or serve as host plants for other smaller medicinal plants—plants that contain medicines for diseases that affect humans. Here's a story about a tree like this told by David Radcliff of the New Community Project:

On the way in and out of the Ecuadorian Amazon, NCP Learning Tour groups stay in partner SELVA's preserve on the banks of the Aguarico River. It is an amazing place, surrounded by tropical plants and animals and with the river literally out the front door. And here's a tale about an amazing thing that happened there ...

The day after our group left this place, a woman arrived carrying her unconscious 14 year-old daughter in her arms. The girl had been bitten by a poisonous snake. (Snake bites are the most common cause of death in the rainforest.)

The mother had already taken the girl to a local hospital and to the oil company clinic, and was turned away at both places—seems neither wanted a nearly-dead girl on their hands. She came to see if our friends would use their car to take her to the hospital about 45 minutes away. Luckily, a medicine man from the Cofan tribe named Aurelio (from a nearby village we had visited several days before) happened to be there also.

As SELVA staff quickly readied a vehicle to take the girl to the hospital, Aurelio went to a nearby cacao de monte tree and scraped off some of its bark. He then came to the girl and squeezed a bit of the sap into her mouth.

Just then, the vehicle appeared and off they rushed toward the hospital. They had been traveling only 15 minutes when the girl revived—she began to get better. They proceeded to the hospital, but her life was no longer in danger—Aurelio had known just what she needed. This plant from the forest had what it took to heal her.

Around the world forests do so many things to make our lives better, but they are being cut at an alarming rate—about 25 million acres a year. The New Community Project is one group working to save forests. We're going to be helping them do that this week with our offerings.

Reading Two

When God created the earth, humans were put in a garden that included all kinds of trees. So we see that trees are part of what God thinks is important for life on earth. Thinking back to what we talked about yesterday, what are some of the problems we have when we start cutting down too many trees? (invite comments) And why do people cut trees down? Let's list some of the reasons. (Cattle ranching is the main cause of cutting trees in the Amazon; farming is also a big cause; housing and suburban sprawl are important factors in the USA; trees are also cut for wood, to make room for oil production, and by poor people looking for land to grow food—or to sell the wood or animals).

Here's a crazy thing—you know that people have pet parakeets. Well, if this colorful bird came from the rainforest, the way they are caught goes like this: a hunter finds a tree where a parakeet has a nest in a hole in the tree, then he cuts the tree down to get the baby birds. You can imagine many of

the birds don't survive the fall to the ground—only 1 out of three survives the crash. Then most of the ones that live end up dying on the way to the market or to the buyer. And of course the tree is destroyed too.

What are some other things we have as part of our lifestyle that cause forests to be cut down? (beef, oil, paper, wood, coffee/cocoa that is grown in the former rainforest)

So what are some things any of us can do to help preserve the forests? (list) Our offerings this week are also helping to save rainforest—the New Community Project is replanting trees in the African nation of Sudan where war and poverty have led to a lot of deforestation, and in Guatemala, where so many trees have been cut, it looks like the surface of the moon in some places. And in the Amazon—well, you won't believe what we're trying to save! We'll learn all about this tomorrow.

Reading Three

The Amazon rainforest is one of the most amazing places on earth. There are hundreds of different kinds of trees, a couple thousand different kinds of snakes, zillions of insects, and a huge amount of the world's fresh water. And the Amazon produces about 20 percent of the world's oxygen. Plus thousands of native people live there and have called it home for thousands of years.

But the Amazon is being cut down very fast. In fact, about 10,000 square miles is cut every year—that's the size of Hawaii. What's the problem with cutting down the rainforest? (invite comments)

The New Community Project takes groups to the Amazon every year. And they see the things that are causing the loss of the forest—oil drilling, cattle ranching, people planting crops. They also heard about 137 acres of rainforest in a very special part of the Amazon in the country of Ecuador that was in danger of being cut down—in fact, some of it had already been cut and planted in corn. But most of it was still forest—and the forested part has all kinds of cool rainforest plants and animals! Can you name some rainforest animals? (sloths, anacondas, monkeys, ants, pink dolphins, tapirs). And get this, there are not one but *three* streams on this land—in fact, one of them starts there! So this is a very special piece of land; it has the plants and water sources that are very important to the health of the rainforest. So NCP has decided to buy this land and protect it so it can remain as rainforest. It's going to cost \$23,000.

That's one of the places the money we raise can go this week. In fact, while \$23,000 sounds like a lot of money, it only comes to \$200 an acre to help save this part of the rainforest! So we're going to see how much we can raise to protect this very special part of God's creation. And by the way, unlike most groups, the New Community Project doesn't keep any of the money we raise for themselves, but sends the whole amount on to help save the forests. Cool!

Reading Four

Paskwale Ben is a Sudanese man on a Mission from God—to plant trees. So many trees have been cut down in his African country that things are a lot drier and hotter, lots of soil gets blown away, and people are even fighting more—because without trees, there's less healthy land, and people want to fight over what's left.

So Paskwale is working with other Christians to plant trees—thousands of them. He has a tree nursery down by the Nile River. He gets youth and children to help him by stepping up and down on the pedals of a water pump, pumping water up from the Nile to his nursery to water the seedlings.

There's only one little problem—there are hippos in the river! And hippos are huge and can be mean—sometimes their teeth are 16 inches long! And where do hippos sleep at night? Anywhere they want to! You can see their huge footprints on the shore near some of the nursery beds. Fortunately, most of Paskwale's nursery is up on higher ground where the hippos don't go.

NCP is helping Paskwale with his mission to reforest his part of Sudan. After all, he's on a Mission from God! He says he's preaching the "gospel of trees"—and bringing a better life for his people at the same time.

It costs about \$10 to plant 100 trees at his nursery. So you can see how far our offerings can go!

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