PART 1

THE END

Restored or Replaced?

Every story must come to an end – even the one great Story that encompasses all other stories. Every generation has been fascinated with the "end times" and the hints that scripture provides in terms of when, where and how the story will end. The Bible repeatedly declares there will be "a new heaven and a new earth" – but how will we get there? Will our current earth be restored to the paradise it initially was? Or will it be replaced by an even more magnificent one? Multiple writers in scripture address this, and the general idea is that caring for the planet is hugely important because it, and everything in it, are gifts from God. But the primary goal of humanity is not to save the earth – it is to fulfill our role in saving the people.

Scripture: Psalm 102:25-26; Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:3-13; Revelation 21:1; Matthew 24-25

Reflection:

Questions:

1. Are you a "restore an old car" or a "replace with a new car" person at heart?

2. Do you think the human condition is getting better or worse? In other words, does each generation seem to be taking a step toward living like Christ or a step away from that?

3. How passionate are you about environmental issues? What, if any, are your major buttons? Why are those things so important to you?

4. In addition to the verses listed on the reverse, read Genesis 2:15 and Colossians 1:16-17. In the end, do you think the earth will be *restored* or *replaced*?

5. Do you think environmental concerns should be mandatory for Christians or optional? Based on what?

6. Jesus doesn't just talk about things in order to satisfy people's curiosity. What is the practical purpose of Jesus' teaching on the "end times" in Matthew 24 and 25?