



## Ask The Beasts: Darwin And The God Of Love

*With Elizabeth Johnson's book as our guide we will explore and deepen our understanding of God's love by looking to the beasts, birds, plants, and fish.*

### Chapter ten - The Community of Creation

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Over the past 10 weeks, as we have explored, questioned, and pondered the connections and relationships between our Biblical scriptures and Darwin's environmental treatise, Johnson has led us back to the beginning, to the garden where our evolutionary journey began. "...man and woman, share the same bones and the same flesh with each other, but also with the animals and birds, all made from the same dust of the ground and thrillingly alive with divine breath of life." (pg 264) From the very beginning our faith is grounded in our interrelatedness. Our relationship, our community of creation, is what defines our faith. The Creator called us to relationship with all of creation and Jesus reiterates that call through modeling our relationships with our brothers and sisters, but the call is the same. "Humbled and delighted by the other life around us, we can grow to know ourselves as members of the community of creation and step up and protect our kin." (page 273)

Throughout the chapter Johnson highlights the inherent relationship between all God-created beings. "Neither plants, animals, nor human beings, neither land, sea, nor air, neither sun, moon, nor stars would exist apart from the life-giving, loving power of the Creator" This is our common denominator, the most basic of identities that binds us together in this crazy, beautiful, spinning globe. While it is true that we most certainly cannot exist without the life-giving, loving power of the Creator, no matter what name or pronoun is used to describe, we also cannot exist without each other or the plants, animals, sun, moon, stars, sea, land or air. If we are inextricably linked to our Creator we are also inextricably linked to each other. This should be the reason for us to lead the way in calling for a change in global and environmental practices and politics. We are called by God to be stewards, caregivers and champions of the Earth and all her inhabitants. How is it that we can still stumble over this most basic call from our Creator?

As a church body we struggle to find common ground on many issues. Many of us, on both sides of divided issues, are maddened by this struggle because we see the issues as so simple and straightforward. As Johnson reminds us, "The Bible is a complex set of works, written over centuries in different genres with various intents. ...the presuppositions that one brings to reading the text and the

"Who is your  
neighbor:  
the Samaritan?  
the outcast?  
the enemy?"

Yes, yes, of course.

But also the whale,  
the dolphin,  
and the rain forest.  
Our neighbor is the  
entire universe.  
We must love it all  
as our self."

- Brian Patrick (pg 281)

methods one uses will unlock different shades of meaning.” Maybe there is more than just humor to 50 Shades ‘O Brethren. The challenge we struggle with is our interconnectedness shifting against our independence, our desire to be our unique and wonderfully-made selves entangled with our interdependence. I thoroughly enjoyed a [recent article \(http://organizingupgrade.com/index.php/modules-menu/culture/item/1012-lessons-from-harry-potter\)](http://organizingupgrade.com/index.php/modules-menu/culture/item/1012-lessons-from-harry-potter) which draws parallels between the fictional world of teenage wizard Harry Potter, as written by J.K. Rowling, and the real-life social justice struggles of our world. As Harry Potter is destined to confront Voldemort, the darkest evil the wizarding world has ever known, Harry comes to find that he and Voldemort share a common connection. Neither he, nor Voldemort, can live while the other survives. I see the same being true for us today. We cannot live in this in-between while so many struggle for basic existence, rights or equality. We cannot live in the wondrousness that is God’s created world while we are also raping it of natural resources and treating our kin as disposable. In the end, Harry understands that it is through love and relationships that he and his wizarding community overcome Voldemort and the evil that has held them for so long. I believe that it will be the same for us; we must use our relationships and foster our communities to tip the scale in the direction of radical love and the loving power of our Creator.

### Questions for Reflection

- Despite our differing perspectives, how can we work together to address climate change? What is our common climatological and theological ground?
- How has *Ask the Beasts* changed your ecological and theological perspective?
- What new questions are you left pondering? Where do you hope this learning and conversation can go next?

