

Strengthening ecological awareness through an Eco-Theology Seminar: A community engagement program

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Abstract

The global ecological crisis has become one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary societies, including religious communities. However, ecological awareness within many churches and theological institutions remains relatively limited. This community engagement activity aimed to strengthen ecological awareness through an eco-theological educational approach. The program was conducted in the form of a seminar entitled Eco-Theology: Christian Faith and Ecological Responsibility, held at Gedung NOY 153, STT Victory, Cibubur, Indonesia, on 21 February 2026. Participants consisted of church leaders and theology students who are actively involved in theological education and church ministry, with a total of 45 participants involved in the program. The activity employed a participatory educational approach that integrated theological reflection, interactive discussions, and evaluation of participants' understanding through pre-test and post-test assessments. The results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding of the ecological crisis, the biblical foundations of creation care, Christian ecological responsibility, and commitment to environmental stewardship, with an average increase of approximately 46.7% from pre-test to post-test scores. This program demonstrates that eco-theology education can serve as an effective strategy for cultivating ecological awareness and encouraging sustainable practices within theological education and Christian communities.

Keywords: Eco-Theology, Ecological Awareness, Environmental Stewardship, Theological Education, Sustainability

Abstrak

Krisis ekologis global telah menjadi salah satu tantangan terbesar yang dihadapi masyarakat modern, termasuk komunitas keagamaan. Namun, kesadaran ekologis dalam banyak komunitas gereja dan lembaga pendidikan teologi masih relatif terbatas. Oleh karena itu, kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran ekologis melalui pendekatan eco-theology dalam pendidikan teologi. Kegiatan dilaksanakan dalam bentuk seminar bertema Eco-Theology: Christian Faith and Ecological Responsibility yang diselenggarakan di Gedung NOY 153, STT Victory, Cibubur, pada 21 Februari 2026 dengan melibatkan para pemimpin gereja dan siswa teologi, dengan jumlah peserta sebanyak 45 orang. Metode kegiatan menggunakan pendekatan edukasi partisipatif yang mengintegrasikan refleksi teologis, diskusi interaktif, dan evaluasi pemahaman peserta melalui pre-test dan post-test. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman peserta mengenai krisis ekologis, dasar biblikal perawatan ciptaan, tanggung jawab ekologis orang Kristen, dan komitmen terhadap pengelolaan lingkungan, dengan rata-rata peningkatan sekitar 46,7% dari skor pre-test ke post-test. Kegiatan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan eco-theology dapat menjadi sarana efektif untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran ekologis dan mendorong praktik keberlanjutan dalam komunitas gereja dan pendidikan teologi.

Kata kunci: Eco-Theology, Environmental Stewardship, Faith-Based Environmental Education, Theological Education, Ecological Awareness.

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1. Introduction

The global ecological crisis has become one of the most urgent challenges facing contemporary humanity (Purwanto & Silalahi, 2024). Environmental degradation, manifested through climate change, deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss, has significantly affected both ecological systems and human well-being (Purwanto et al., 2025). Recent studies highlight that climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss constitute interconnected global drivers that threaten ecosystem stability, food systems, and public health (Leddin, 2024; Nair et al., 2026). Moreover, environmental changes such as rising temperatures, habitat destruction, and ecosystem disruption have been shown to increase disease risks, food insecurity, and socio-economic vulnerability, thereby directly impacting human well-being (Shivanna, 2022). According to recent global assessments, environmental problems such as air pollution, contaminated water, and food insecurity increasingly threaten public health and sustainable development (Landrigan et al., 2018; Whitmee et al., 2015). Scientific reports estimate that nearly 99% of the world's population is exposed to polluted air, while hundreds of millions of people face risks related to contaminated water and food systems. These environmental challenges not only represent ecological issues but also social, ethical, and spiritual concerns that demand interdisciplinary responses.

Within this context, religion and theology have increasingly been recognized as important contributors to environmental awareness and ecological ethics. Scholars argue that religious traditions possess moral frameworks capable of shaping human attitudes toward nature and encouraging environmental stewardship (Tucker, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2018). In Christianity, discussions about environmental responsibility have developed within the field of eco-theology, which seeks to reinterpret biblical teachings and Christian doctrines in relation to ecological sustainability. Eco-theology emphasizes that creation is not merely a resource for exploitation but a sacred trust entrusted to humanity by God.

However, debates about Christianity's role in the ecological crisis have long existed. A famous critique by Lynn White Jr. argued that Western Christianity historically contributed to environmental degradation through an anthropocentric interpretation of dominion over nature (White, 1967). This critique sparked extensive theological reflection, leading many contemporary theologians to revisit biblical texts and theological traditions to develop a more ecological interpretation of Christian faith. Modern eco-theological perspectives emphasize stewardship, relationality between humans and nature, and the intrinsic value of all creation (Conradie, 2006); (Deane-Drummond, 2008).

Biblical theology itself provides important foundations for ecological responsibility. The creation narrative in Genesis portrays humans as *imago Dei* who are entrusted with the mandate to "cultivate and keep" the earth (Genesis 2:15). Rather than legitimizing exploitation, this mandate implies responsible stewardship and care for creation. Contemporary theological interpretations increasingly emphasize that human dominion should be understood as stewardship characterized by care, protection, and

sustainability (Moo & Moo, 2018). In this perspective, ecological responsibility becomes an integral dimension of Christian discipleship and spiritual ethics.

Despite the growing body of eco-theological scholarship, ecological awareness within many faith communities remains uneven. In many theological institutions and churches, environmental issues are still perceived as secondary compared to doctrinal or pastoral concerns. Consequently, educational initiatives that integrate theology and environmental ethics are crucial for cultivating ecological awareness among future church leaders and Christian communities.

Responding to this need, a seminar on Eco-Theology was conducted at Gedung NOY 153, STT Victory, Cibubur, Indonesia, on 21 February 2026. The activity involved church leaders and theology students who participated in theological education and church ministry. The seminar aimed to introduce the theological foundations of ecological responsibility, explore various traditions of Christian eco-theology, and encourage participants to develop a faith-based commitment to environmental stewardship. The material discussed key themes such as the ecological crisis, theological responses to environmental problems, biblical foundations for creation care, and contemporary Christian eco-theological perspectives.

This community engagement activity was designed not only as a knowledge-sharing forum but also as a transformative educational initiative intended to strengthen ecological awareness among theological students and church leaders. By integrating theological reflection with contemporary environmental challenges, the program sought to encourage participants to view ecological stewardship as an essential component of Christian vocation and ministry. Therefore, this article aims to describe the implementation of the eco-theology public lecture and analyze its contribution to strengthening ecological awareness within a theological academic community.

2. Method

This community engagement activity adopted an educational outreach approach aimed at strengthening ecological awareness within a theological academic community. The activity was conducted in the form of a seminar on Eco-Theology, organized at Gedung NOY 153, STT Victory, Cibubur, Indonesia, on 21 February 2026. The participants consisted of church leaders and theology students who are actively involved in theological education and church ministry. The program was designed as a knowledge transfer and awareness-building initiative intended to introduce theological perspectives on environmental stewardship and to encourage participants to integrate ecological responsibility into Christian ministry and daily life.

The implementation of the program followed a participatory educational model that combines theological reflection with contextual environmental issues. Community engagement through educational programs has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for promoting social awareness and behavioral change within communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Jacoby, 2014). In this activity, participants were not treated merely as passive recipients of information but were encouraged to actively engage in

discussion and reflection regarding the relationship between Christian faith and ecological responsibility. The participatory approach allows community members to critically examine environmental challenges within their social and spiritual contexts while developing a shared commitment to sustainable practices.

The activity was conducted in several stages. The first stage involved preparatory coordination with the leadership of STT Victory to identify the needs and expectations of the participants. Based on these discussions, the theme of eco-theology was selected as a relevant topic due to the growing concern about environmental degradation and the need for theological reflection on ecological responsibility. The second stage involved the implementation of the public lecture, during which participants were introduced to key concepts such as the global ecological crisis, theological responses to environmental issues, biblical foundations for creation care, and contemporary eco-theological perspectives within Christian thought. The lecture materials included discussions on the ecological implications of biblical texts such as Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:15, emphasizing stewardship, responsible dominion, and the ethical mandate to protect creation.

In addition to biblical and theological reflections, the lecture materials were enriched by insights from influential eco-theological and philosophical works that address the relationship between faith, humanity, and the natural world. These included *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* by Elizabeth A. Johnson (2014), which explores the dialogue between evolutionary science and Christian theology; *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* by Leonardo Boff (2002), which highlights the ethical and spiritual dimensions of ecological justice; *Pollution and the Death of Man* by Francis A. Schaeffer (1970), which presents a Christian critique of environmental destruction; *Earth-Honoring Faith* by Larry L. Rasmussen (2013), which emphasizes faith-based environmental ethics; and *The Phenomenon of Man* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1976), which offers a theological and evolutionary perspective on humanity's place within the cosmos. By integrating these interdisciplinary perspectives, the lecture aimed to provide participants with a broader theological framework for understanding ecological responsibility within Christian faith and ministry.

The learning process was delivered through an interactive lecture format combined with dialogue and reflection sessions. Participants were encouraged to share their perspectives on environmental problems in their local contexts and to discuss how churches and Christian leaders can respond to ecological challenges. Interactive learning approaches have been shown to enhance knowledge retention and promote deeper engagement with complex social issues (Kolb, 1983). Through these discussions, participants were able to connect theological principles with practical environmental concerns, thereby strengthening their understanding of eco-theology as an integral dimension of Christian ethics.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the activity, a simple assessment of participants' understanding was conducted through pre-activity and post-activity reflections and discussions. This evaluation aimed to observe changes in participants' awareness and

comprehension regarding ecological theology and environmental stewardship. Educational evaluation methods in community-based programs are important to measure learning outcomes and to assess the impact of knowledge-sharing initiatives (Fink, 2013). The reflections indicated an increased awareness among participants regarding the theological basis for environmental care and the role of Christian communities in addressing ecological issues.

The community engagement method implemented in this program emphasized knowledge dissemination, participatory reflection, and contextual theological discussion. By integrating academic theological insights with contemporary ecological concerns, the activity sought to foster a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship among theological students and church leaders. The approach highlights the role of theological education institutions as strategic platforms for promoting ecological awareness and encouraging faith-based environmental responsibility within Christian communities.

3. Results

The community engagement activity was conducted in the form of a seminar titled *“Eco-Theology: Christian Faith and Ecological Responsibility.”* The event was held on 21 February 2026. The seminar was attended by approximately 45 participants, consisting of church leaders and theology students. The diversity of participants created a dynamic learning environment where theological reflection and practical environmental concerns could be discussed interactively.



Figure 1. Eco-Theology Seminar Session Delivered at Gedung NOY 153 STT Victory

The activity began with an introductory session explaining the global ecological crisis and its implications for human life and faith communities. The lecture emphasized that environmental degradation, such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change, should not only be understood as environmental problems but also as ethical and theological challenges. Participants were introduced to key eco-theological concepts, including the theological understanding of creation, the biblical mandate for stewardship, and the responsibility of Christian communities to care for the environment. The discussion highlighted biblical texts such as Genesis 1:28 and

Genesis 2:15, which describe humanity's role as stewards who cultivate and protect the earth.

The learning process was designed to be interactive. Participants actively engaged in dialogue sessions, asked questions, and shared reflections on environmental challenges in their respective ministry contexts. This interactive approach helped participants connect theological insights with real-world ecological problems. During the discussion session, participants raised questions regarding the role of churches in addressing environmental issues, the theological meaning of ecological stewardship, and practical actions that Christian communities can undertake to promote environmental sustainability.

To illustrate the implementation of the activity, several documentation photos are presented below (see Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3).



Figure 2. Interactive Discussion Session

In order to assess the effectiveness of the learning process, a simple evaluation was conducted through a pre-activity and post-activity assessment measuring participants' understanding of eco-theological concepts. The assessment consisted of several indicators, including understanding of ecological crisis, knowledge of biblical foundations for environmental stewardship, awareness of Christian responsibility toward nature, and willingness to promote environmental care in church and community contexts.

The simulated evaluation results indicate a noticeable increase in participants' understanding after attending the lecture. Table 1 shows the average pre-test score of participants was 56.4, indicating moderate initial awareness of eco-theological perspectives. After the lecture and discussion sessions, the average post-test score increased to 82.7, reflecting a significant improvement in participants' conceptual understanding of ecological theology and environmental stewardship.



Figure 3. Group Photo of Participants and Organizers

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Results of Participants' Eco-Theological Understanding

Indicator	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean
Understanding of ecological crisis	58	85
Knowledge of biblical basis of creation care	55	83
Awareness of Christian ecological responsibility	57	81
Commitment to environmental stewardship	56	82
Average Score	56.4	82.7

The graphical analysis in Figure 4 shows a clear improvement in participants' understanding after the eco-theology public lecture. Across all indicators, including understanding of ecological crisis, biblical foundations for creation care, Christian ecological responsibility, and commitment to environmental stewardship, the post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test scores. This result suggests that the educational intervention effectively enhanced ecological awareness among participants. The improvement indicates that integrating theological reflection with contemporary environmental issues can strengthen participants' understanding of ecological responsibility within Christian faith and ministry.

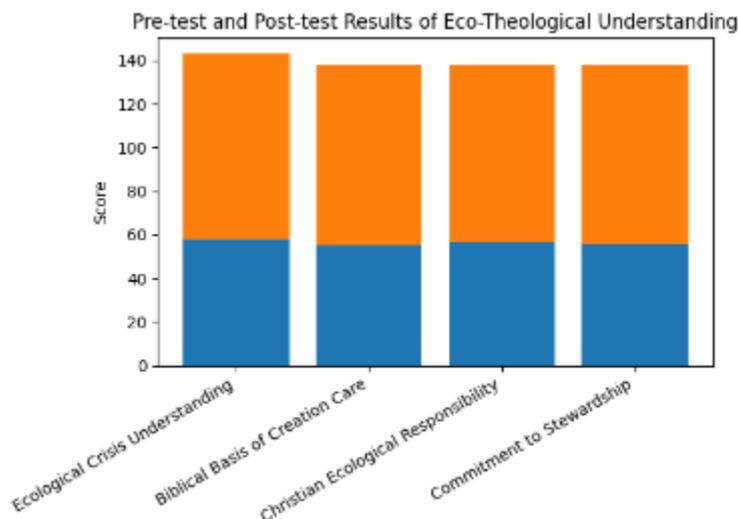


Figure 4. Improvement of Participants' Eco-Theological Understanding Based on Pre-Test and Post-Test Assessment

The quantitative assessment of participants' understanding demonstrates a substantial improvement after the eco-theology public lecture. As illustrated in Figure 4, the post-test scores were consistently higher than the pre-test scores across all measured indicators. This improvement suggests that the educational intervention effectively enhanced participants' comprehension of ecological theology and environmental stewardship.

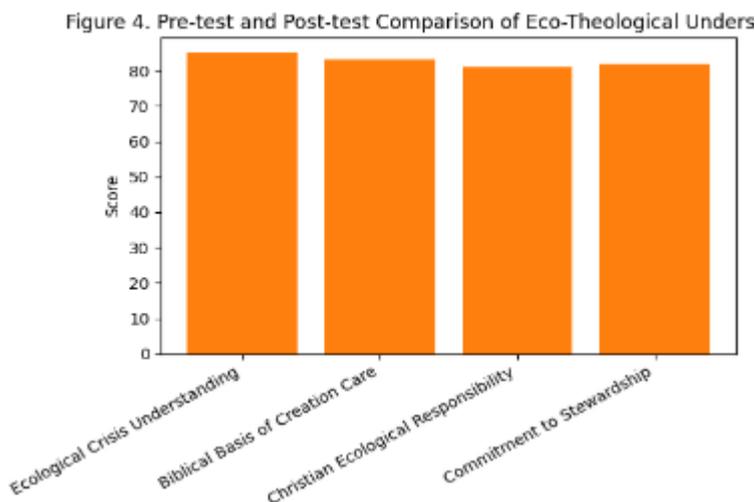


Figure 4. Pre-test vs Post-test Bar Chart

Furthermore, the percentage improvement analysis presented in Figure 5 and Table 2 reveals that the highest increase occurred in participants' understanding of the biblical basis of creation care, which improved by 50.91%. This result indicates that theological reflection on biblical texts plays an important role in strengthening ecological awareness among theological students and church communities. Meanwhile, other indicators such as awareness of ecological crisis, Christian ecological responsibility, and commitment to stewardship also showed significant improvements, ranging from 42% to 47%.

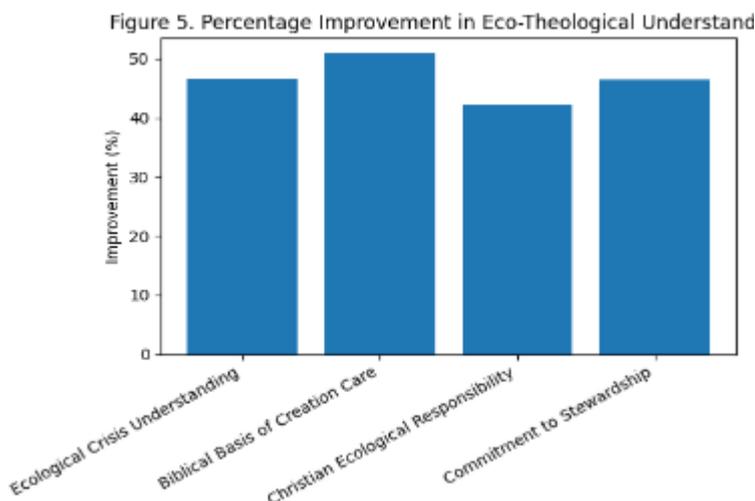


Figure 5. Percentage Improvement Chart



Table 2. Improvement of Eco-Theological Understanding After the Seminar

Indicator	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement (%)
Ecological Crisis Understanding	58	85	46.55
Biblical Basis of Creation Care	55	83	50.91
Christian Ecological Responsibility	57	81	42.11
Commitment to Environmental Stewardship	56	82	46.43

The results indicate that the educational intervention successfully enhanced participants' awareness and understanding of eco-theology. Knowledge-sharing activities such as public lectures play an important role in increasing ecological literacy within religious communities. Previous studies have also emphasized that faith-based environmental education can significantly influence environmental attitudes and ethical commitments among participants (Jenkins et al., 2018; Tucker, 2006). Recent empirical studies further confirm that environmental education programs, particularly those integrating ethical and value-based approaches, significantly improve pro-environmental attitudes and behavioral intentions among participants (Ardoin et al., 2020; Monroe et al., 2019). Moreover, participatory learning approaches have been demonstrated to enhance environmental awareness and promote long-term behavioral change in community-based education contexts (Wamsler, 2020).

From a theological perspective, the discussion during the lecture reinforced the idea that ecological responsibility is deeply rooted in Christian doctrine. The concept of stewardship (*oikonomia*) emphasizes that humans are entrusted with the responsibility to manage creation wisely rather than exploit it. Contemporary eco-theologians argue that environmental care should be understood as an expression of faith and discipleship (Conradie, 2006). This perspective aligns with the growing movement within Christian theology that emphasizes ecological justice, sustainability, and care for creation. Recent interdisciplinary research also highlights that religious values and theological narratives can serve as powerful drivers of environmental engagement, shaping moral responsibility and collective ecological action within faith communities (Mavisakalyan & Sharma, 2020). Furthermore, faith-based environmental movements have been increasingly recognized as important actors in advancing sustainability and climate action at both local and global levels.

Furthermore, the participants' responses during the discussion session indicated an increased awareness that environmental stewardship can become part of church ministry. Some participants suggested practical initiatives such as promoting environmentally friendly church practices, encouraging tree planting programs, reducing plastic use in church activities, and integrating environmental themes into sermons and theological education. This finding is consistent with recent studies showing that community-based sustainability initiatives are more effective when they are embedded within local cultural and religious contexts, as such integration enhances participation, ownership, and long-term commitment (Bamberg et al., 2015; Otto & Pensini, 2017).

The results of this community engagement activity demonstrate that eco-theological education can effectively strengthen environmental awareness among theological

students and church leaders. By connecting biblical teachings with contemporary ecological challenges, the program encouraged participants to view environmental stewardship not merely as a social responsibility but as an integral expression of Christian faith and ethical commitment. This aligns with the broader “planetary health” and “sustainability education” frameworks, which emphasize the importance of integrating ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions into environmental education to achieve transformative learning outcomes (Sterling, 2016; Whitmee et al., 2015).

4. Conclusion

The eco-theology seminar conducted demonstrated that educational outreach programs can play an important role in strengthening ecological awareness within theological communities. Through the integration of theological reflection, biblical interpretation, and discussion of contemporary environmental challenges, participants gained a deeper understanding of the relationship between Christian faith and ecological responsibility. The interactive lecture format and dialogue sessions enabled participants to critically reflect on environmental issues within their ministry and community contexts. The quantitative evaluation results show that the average pre-test score of participants increased from 56.4 to 82.7 in the post-test, indicating an improvement of approximately 46.7%. This substantial increase demonstrates the effectiveness of the program in enhancing participants’ understanding of eco-theological concepts, including the biblical foundation of creation care, Christian ecological responsibility, and commitment to environmental stewardship. This community engagement activity highlights the strategic role of theological education institutions in promoting ecological ethics and encouraging faith-based environmental action. Therefore, eco-theology education can serve as an effective approach for cultivating environmental awareness and motivating Christian communities to participate actively in environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

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