



"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it"

Psalm 24:1

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[PP#1] As followers of Christ we understand the Bible, the book of God's words, to be authoritative in our lives. So let's consider a few of the things it says about the book of God's works, creation.

Summary of the Biblical story



**We are created for relationship
with God, Others, and The Rest of
Creation**

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[PP#2] The biblical story is fundamentally about relationships. As it concerns humanity there are 3 primary ones that God set up in early Genesis. We have Adam and Eve relating with God ... each other ...and the other creatures in the Garden.



CREATURELY KINSHIP

GEN 1:22,28; 2:7FF

& HUMAN AUTHORITY

GEN 1:28

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[PP#3] The text goes out of its way to emphasize the close kinship the human creatures have with the nonhuman ones. For instance, we're made from the same ground, on the same day, and we're given the same tasks (Gen 1:22, 28; 2:7ff) - be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth. Additionally, the text also emphasizes the authority bestowed upon the only creatures made in God's image. That we have authority within creation imparted to us by God is clear. We are to rule and subdue (Gen 1:28). But what is the nature of our authority?



“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

GENESIS 2:15

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[PP#4] Gen 2:15 gives us our first clue.

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

“To work” is the Hebrew word abad. This is the same verb used in Joshua 24:15

“But as for me and my household, we will serve (abad) the LORD.”

“Take care of it” is the Hebrew word shamar. This is the same verb used in Num 6:24-26

“The LORD bless you, and keep (shamar) you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.”



**Human authority:
service which
enables the
flourishing of those
under our authority**

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[PP#5] So human authority is best expressed as service which enables the flourishing of those under our authority [not a bad definition of any good leadership!] and this call is perfectly consistent with another major clue regarding the nature of our authority over creation. We are created in God's image so, presumably, our rule should be modeled after His rule.

**“... taking the
very nature of
a servant ...”**

PHIL 2:5-11



[PP#6] But how did God, in Christ, exercise his authority over us? Phil 2:5-11 says “... he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself a servant even unto death on a cross...”



Human authority: sacrificial service which enables the flourishing of those under our authority

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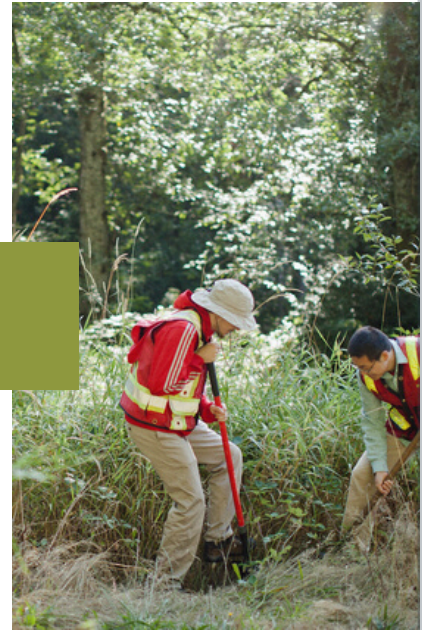
[PP#7] So if our stewardship of creation is modeled on Christ, the truly human one, then our authority will be expressed as sacrificial service which enables the flourishing of those under our authority.

This picture from Genesis is describing, fundamentally, what it means to be human. This is not merely a hobby for those with green thumbs. Cultivating creation in such a way that the latent potential within it can be revealed is the common task of every divine image bearer. According to the biblical picture, this is how we are fully human. It is what we are created to be and do and therefore it is what is best for us (not to mention other creatures).

Compare the sacrifices a parent makes for a child: sleepless nights, helping with homework, making meals, and so on. Self-giving love for the sake of another does not diminish us, it reveals who we really are!

SHALOM: WORSHIP GOD LOVE PEOPLE CARE FOR CREATION

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[PP#8] This is shalom – all relationships working as God intended. We worship God, love people, and care for creation. This is the biblical picture of how the world works, the vision for how life is best lived and the vision gets repeated throughout scripture. We see it in the covenant with all living creatures, including Noah, following the flood; in the covenant with Abraham; in the expansion of the covenant with the Israelites via Moses; and so on and so forth.

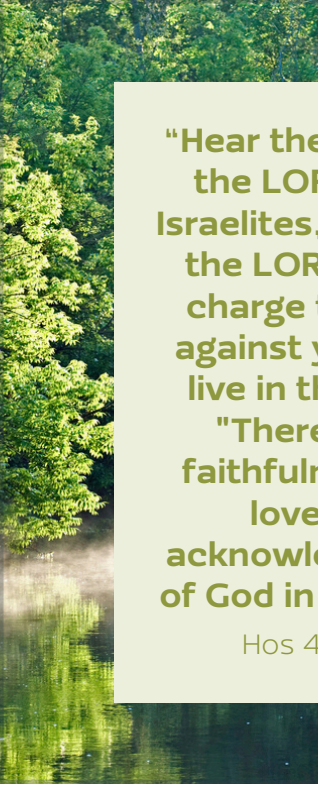


We are created for relationship with God, Others, and The Rest of Creation

All three relationships are broken due to human rebellion

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[PP#9] But of course, this wonderful picture doesn't last long. Yahweh is the "Maker of heaven and earth" and, like a priceless heirloom, he's entrusted us with his handiwork but we, in turn, don't trust his operating instructions. We rebel against God, we blame other people, and our creaturely kin suffers as a result. The prophets knew this dynamic and understood it well. They were constantly calling God's people to return to the Lord and trust his vision for what abundant life really means rather than what their neighbours were pursuing.



“Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land.

Hos 4:1-3

There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying.

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[PP#10] E.g. Hosea 4

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In Hosea we see alienation in all 3 relationships. They are linked, interconnected, and mutually reinforcing.

When we ignore God’s guidelines for life the result is brokenness and degradation for ourselves, others, and creation.



**We are created for
relationship with God,
Others, and The Rest of
Creation**

**All three relationships are
broken due to human
rebellion**

**All three relationships will be
healed by Christ's work.
Colossians 1:15-20**

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[PP#11] Thank God that he doesn't leave us in this hopeless state. Instead, as Paul affirms in Colossians 1, Christ created all things, sustains all things and died and rose to reconcile all things! Put another way, everything exists as a result of Christ's creating and sustaining work. And furthermore, everything is being redeemed through him. Christ brings shalom to all relationships.

ALL THREE RELATIONSHIPS ARE BROKEN DUE TO HUMAN REBELLION

All three relationships will be healed by Christ's work. Christian mission and kingdom work?



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[PP#12] But the question becomes, “how do we respond?” What is our Christian mission? How will we participate in Christ’s healing work?

We may have a good sense of what it means to worship God and love people but what does it look like to build the Kingdom of God by caring for creation? To promote shalom in this third relationship?



**Christian mission
and kingdom work:
Cultivating Shalom
Worship God
Love People
Care for Creation
Go and see –
direct engagement**

Genesis 2:16, 19

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[PP#13] I'm convinced that just as the Spirit works in our lives to transform our walk with God and our human relationships He also wants to teach us the art of Earthkeeping. After all, the Spirit is shaping us to be Christ-like. Christ models true humanness for us and earthkeeping is the original human calling.

What is the first step of a Spirit-inspired earthkeeper?

Cultivating Shalom
Worship God
Love People
Care for Creation



[PP#14] Go and see. Explore. The key is to interact directly. The Planet Earth DVDs are a good start but I'm not really talking about that. I have in mind an unmediated direct experience of creation. Get your hands in the dirt, investigate a spider's web, and study an ant or a flower or a bird.

It's not surprising that this sort of interaction is exactly what happens in the Garden following the charge to serve and keep. In the very next verse we are told to "Eat freely". There's hardly a more all-encompassing, embodied, experience than eating. And right after that we have this marvelous scene of show and tell, or show and name, to be precise. This, of course, is no mere labeling. Rather we see the Creator so satisfied by the intimate, familial relations between his creatures that the scene might be best described as a christening.

**“WE CARE FOR ONLY
WHAT WE LOVE. WE
LOVE ONLY WHAT WE
KNOW. WE TRULY
KNOW ONLY WHAT
WE EXPERIENCE.”**

STEVEN BOUMA-PREDIGER

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[PP#15] The important connection between experience and care is concisely summarized by this quotation.

“We care for only what we love. We love only what we know. We truly know only what we experience.” Steven Bouma-Prediger

So the first step in earthkeeping is to experience; go and see. This experience will cultivate knowledge which may foster love and ultimately care. But it starts with direct engagement. Perhaps this progression explains why A Rocha’s work so often emphasizes action, getting involved.



“... the rural poor depend directly on the natural resource base. This is where their pharmacy is, this is where the local super-market is, this is where the [hardware] store is, this is in fact their fuel station, their power company, their water company. What would happen to you if these things were removed from your local neighbourhood?”

Stella Simiyu

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[PP#16] A Rocha is an organization that exists to show God’s love for all creation. Our vision is to see people and places transformed into healthy, hope-filled communities. We want to do the Kingdom work of restoring ecosystems and inspiring people to live in ways that bring shalom to all God’s creatures, human or not. God’s plea is “I’m not slowing down! You catch up!” Please join us on this amazing journey.



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At this point you may choose to show the DVD giving A Rocha's background available for download at www.arocha.ca. or show [PP#17 & 18] and describe your experience with A Rocha.