

Ten Biblical Principles for Agricultural Development

David Evans – 20 August 2013

Introduction:

According to God's mandate in Deuteronomy 8:3, people shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God. Thus, we are to live by bread, but we are also to live by the Word of God. When these two things are combined for the agriculturist in an intentional way, it leads to all kinds of exciting opportunities, discoveries, and adventures. When asked what prompted him to study the lowly peanut, George Washington Carver said, "Why, I just took a handful of peanuts and looked at them. 'Great Creator,' I said, 'Why did you make the peanut? Why?' With such knowledge as I had of chemistry and physics I set to work to take the peanut apart".

Carver understood that agriculture and God's revelation through His Word go hand in hand. In fact, I believe that his words and actions continue to challenge us today to examine the way that we as Christians do agriculture. Is any of the care that is mentioned in the Scriptures for both land and animals exhibited on the farms of Christians throughout the world today? Or is a Christian farm today indistinguishable from that of a non-Christian? In addition to this area of stewardship, there is a clear Biblical mandate given to people to develop the creation. It is the God-given role of people involved in agriculture to be fruitful and to produce bounty with the resources that God has entrusted to them. Without bounty, there is an ever-decreasing resource base to steward. Conversely, without stewardship, the bounty is short-lived and eventually exhausted. Both need to happen simultaneously in order for God's creation to unfold according to His intentions.

The following principles are an attempt to help people involved in agriculture around the world to better understand the role that they are called to play in bringing God's Word and His kingdom to bear on the land, animals, and neighbors that have been entrusted to their care. The application of these principles will not be easy. That said, the apostle Paul's words ring true for us when he commands us to not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

This working document is primarily designed for use by agricultural extensionists and educators working with farmers in the context of the developing world. That said, it should also be useful in more general settings that deal in some way with the study and/or practice of agriculture. Please feel free to experiment with the use of this document in your own context.

Principle #1 – Earth Ownership Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

The earth is the Lord's and all that it contains.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

God exists and He created the universe.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 1:1, 31 and Psalm 24:1

Counterfeit Principle:

The earth came into being by physical forces that are unrelated to any act of God. As such, it has no owner or inherent goodness.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) As an introductory educational session in agricultural development interventions to establish God's ownership of the earth and its importance as a result of it being created good by Him.
- 2) To help farmers develop a love and respect for the land, animals and crops because God created them good and He continues to own them.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson Plan could incorporate a Role Play which acts out the creation story in Genesis Chapter 1 followed by a discussion of the ramifications of God's ownership of the earth on their farming practices.

Principle #2 -- First Farmer Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

God is the First Farmer, the author and initiator of agriculture.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

God exists and He created the universe.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 2:8

Counterfeit Principle:

God is not interested in the "dirty" material domain called agriculture. He is only interested in "higher, more spiritual" things.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 3) With non-Christian farmers who view their work as dirty, lowly and meaningless
- 4) With Christian farmers who believe God is only interested in spiritual things, and
- 5) As an introductory educational session in agricultural development interventions.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson Plan will incorporate a Closed-Ended Story of Aymara farmers from Bolivia discovering this truth. Story will include questions for the participants.

Principle #3 -- First Farmer Relationship Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Those who practice agriculture need to have a good relationship with the First Farmer.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

Humans are fallen rebels, but God is working through history to redeem humankind and restore everything that was broken as a result of the fall.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 3:17-19
2 Corinthians 5:17
Romans 8:19-23

Counterfeit Principle:

There is no need for farmers to believe in the Messiah in order for them to experience all of God's fullness in the area of agriculture.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) Non-Christian farmers who are interested in holistic agriculture principles, but who do not feel the need to convert to Christ,
- 2) Non-Christian farmers who are actively worshipping other gods in their practice of agriculture, and
- 3) Christian farmers who do not yet know that God calls them to be agents of reconciliation in the area of agriculture.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will incorporate the use of a Development Related Bible Study focusing on the Biblical parable of the sower and the seed.

Principle #4 -- High Calling Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Those who practice agriculture have a high calling from God, which is full of dignity and purpose.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

God created men and women in His image.

Key Bible Passages:

Psalm 8:4-8

Counterfeit Principle:

Agriculture is a lowly occupation and those who practice it are devoid of dignity and purpose.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) With farmers who view their work as dirty, lowly and meaningless
- 2) With Christian farmers who do not understand the concept of a calling from God
- 3) With farmers who believe they have a call to farm, but are discouraged by their circumstances or results.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use a comedic Role Play featuring two farmers—one that understands this principle and lives it out and the other who hates his vocation and longs for a sedentary government job.

Principle #5 -- Sacred Work Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Those who practice agriculture should strive to honor and glorify God through their work.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

Work is sacred and God has given humankind a mandate to work out

Key Bible Passages:

I Corinthians 10:31

James 5:7

II Timothy 2:6

Counterfeit Principle:

Agricultural work is a necessary evil to put bread on the table and it is not possible to glorify the one true God through farming.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) Christian farmers who do not understand the concept that all labor done by Christians can and should be full-time ministry unto the Lord
- 2) Animist farmers who are honoring and glorifying other gods through their farming
- 3) Secular farmers who are honoring the god of science through their farming.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use a Song to reinforce the sacredness of work. The song can be sung while farming.

Principle #6 -- Dominion Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Farmers are commanded by God to have dominion over the creation.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

As God's image bearer, man is to exercise dominion over all areas of the creation.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 1:26

Counterfeit Principle:

The creation has dominion over humankind and humans are at the mercy of whatever nature throws at them (fatalism).

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to practice good pest and weed control
- 2) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to irrigate crops in low rainfall areas,
- 3) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to construct and use greenhouses in cold climates
- 4) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to use fertilizer to raise nutrient levels in the soil.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use an actual case study from Guatemala that demonstrates how poor farmers there took control of their rat infestation problem in their maize silos as a result of coming to understand and embrace the biblical principle of dominion. **(See Attachment 1 for full lesson plan).**

Principle #7 -- Bounty Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Farmers are commanded by God to be fruitful and produce bounty from the land and animals that God has entrusted to them.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

The creation is an open system and God's desire is that bounty be created within that system.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 1:28

Counterfeit Principle:

Creation is a closed system and therefore it is "zero sum". My gain will be my neighbor's loss. Similarly, my neighbor's gain will be my loss. This "zero sum" view often leads to jealousy, distrust and social ostracism.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) Convincing and/or teaching farmers in animistic cultures that increased food production will help rather than hurt their neighbors
- 2) Convincing farmers that all of them in a community can increase their production simultaneously.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use (if possible) a Guided Testimony from someone in the community who used to believe that his neighbor could steal his production via an evil eye or juju, but now has changed his way of thinking and acting (most likely due to changing his/her worldview resulting from a conversion to Christ). Alternatively, the lesson plan could use an African proverb about a mango seed. It is a powerful tool that helps people see that this is not a zero sum game. The Proverb states, "You can count the number of seeds in a mango, but you cannot count the mangos in the seed." Discussion of the proverb would follow.

Principle #8 -- Stewardship Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Farmers are commanded by God to steward the land, natural resources, farm animals and crops that He has placed in their care.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

God created all things and they belong to Him. Humans are to be God's stewards of all created things.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 2:15 and 19

Counterfeit Principle:

There are no moral laws that govern the universe. Therefore, farmers can use their land, natural resources, farm animals and crops in any way that they choose.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to conserve their soil (*Leviticus 25: 3-4: "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard"*)
- 2) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to conserve and protect surface and ground water
- 3) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to tenderly care for their animals (*Genesis 2:19: "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name."* *Leviticus 25: 7: "Even your cattle and the animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat".* *Luke 14: 5: And [Jesus] said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?"*)
- 4) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to conserve their post-harvest production, and
- 5) Convincing and/or teaching Christian farmers to tithe the fruits of their labor to God.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use Development Related Bible Studies focusing on Leviticus 25: 3-4 for land and natural resource care, Genesis 2:19 for farm animal care, and Deuteronomy for tithing of first fruits. **(See Attachment #2 for full lesson plan).**

Principle #9 -- Diversity Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

God delights in the diversity of his creation and farmers should strive to encourage and maintain the diversity that He created.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

God's creation is beautiful and reflects the beauty and diversity of the creator.

Key Bible Passages:

Genesis 1:11-12; 20-21; 24-25

Counterfeit Principle:

There is no intrinsic value in nature itself. In addition, maintaining genetic, ecosystem and agricultural diversity hinders humankind's ability to develop, progress, and meet human needs for food and fiber.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle¹:

- 1) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to appreciate the diversity, beauty and intrinsic value of the creation around them
- 2) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to appreciate and maintain diversity within crop and livestock species
- 3) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to appreciate and maintain diversity among different species.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use an Open-Ended Story to engage farmers in a discussion about the intrinsic value of diversity in the creation around them.

¹ These diversity applications are largely drawn from a paper written by Robb De Haan, Professor of Agriculture, Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, USA.

Principle #10 -- Neighborly Love Principle

Key Statement of Principle:

Those who practice agriculture should treat their neighbors as they would wish to be treated themselves.

Related Biblical Worldview Principles:

God commands us to love others as he loves us.

Key Bible Passages:

Galatians 5:14

Counterfeit Principle:

I am not my brother's (neighbor's) keeper.

Possible Applications and/or Target Audiences for the Principle:

- 1) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to share their produce with those in need
- 2) Convincing and/or teaching farmers to conduct their business affairs (buying and selling produce and animals) in an honest and just way
- 3) Helping farmers to actively look for ways to bless their neighboring farmers as opposed to trying to destroy them.

Lesson Plan Idea using Non-Formal Educational Method to Communicate the Principle:

Lesson plan will use a Case Study along the lines of the Good Samaritan story, but dealing with farmers in a farming community. Questions will engage farmers in a discussion about loving one's neighbor.



ATTACHMENT #1

HOLISTIC AGRICULTURE: DOMINION PRINCIPLE LESSON PLAN

Date: 30 January 2003
Created by: Dave Evans/Scott Allen
Location: Scottsdale, AZ
Credits: Darrow Miller and Arturo Cuba for the story

Title: Who is Smarter, You or the Rats?

Intended Audience: This lesson is particularly designed for farmers who tend toward fatalism with regards to the management of their farms.

Time: 60 minutes

Objectives: This session is designed to change the knowledge and attitudes of farmers with regards to the control of pests and weeds. Specifically, the goal of the session is that participants will recognize that they are God's regents who have been commissioned by Him to exercise dominion over their farms. The session is not designed to provide specific skills in order for them to be able to act on the new knowledge and attitude. A subsequent session is required which would train farmers in appropriate pest and/or weed control methods to act upon this new knowledge or attitude.

Materials: Case study and the question guide (See Attachment). Whiteboard with marker, chalkboard with chalk, or easel with newsprint and marker. If working with a literate group, then one copy of the case study and questions is required for each participant. If working with an illiterate group, then only the facilitator will require a copy of the case study and questions.

Steps:

- 1) Seat participants in a circle so that each one can see the faces of all the others in the group. If the group is too large to do this, break the group into smaller sub-groups.
- 2) Greet the participants and help them to feel relaxed by using a culturally appropriate interaction method (ice breaker, discussion about weather, tell a joke, remain quiet, etc.)
- 3) Explain to the group that you will be discussing and analyzing an actual case study from a rural community located in Guatemala. If the group is literate, pass out the case study at this point. If the group is illiterate, read the case study to the group slowly. You will most likely need to repeat it a few times. The reading of the study (oral or written) will take approximately 15 minutes.

- 4) Ask the participants to answer the questions. Then facilitate a discussion of the answers. The facilitator should work toward producing an “aha” moment on the part of the participants in which they gain new knowledge and/or change their attitude about their God-given role as regent over their farms.
- 5) The facilitator should then engage the participants in a discussion about how they plan to act upon this new knowledge and/or attitude. The facilitator should take careful notes at this point in order to be able to follow up on the resolutions and commitments that are made by the participants.
- 6) Time and participant interest permitting, the facilitator may decide to conduct a follow-on session at that moment, which teaches appropriate methods for rat control and/or other pests or weeds.

Proof of Knowledge/Attitude Change: At the end of the session, the participants should have an understanding of the biblical concept of dominion, they should be able to enumerate areas on their farms where they are practicing good dominion, areas where they need to improve their dominion, and areas where they are willing to make a commitment to make those changes in the coming year.

Additional Notes (optional): None.

Dominion Principle Lesson Plan Attachment

Case Study – "Who is Smarter, You or the Rats?"

Arturo Cuba is a community development promoter working with a poverty-stricken group of Pokomchi Indians in a remote valley in rural Guatemala. The Pokomchi are largely subsistence farmers. Arturo has lived in the community for several months, building relationships and trying to help out where possible. He attends the local church and has befriended many of the local pastors and other Christians in the community.

In the middle of the 20th Century, missionaries came to evangelize and plant churches in the community. Many Pokomchi accepted Christ, but despite the large number of Christians that resulted, their communities have remained desperately poor. The young Christian converts were taught that they should focus their efforts entirely on spiritual things. As such, they fixed all their hopes on the afterlife when they would leave their miserable existence on earth and go to be with Jesus in heaven.

Toward the latter part of the 20th Century, Christian relief and development organizations came to work in the Pokomchi community. They were interested in helping them overcome their physical poverty. They brought in money and materials and completed many projects. As a result, the Pokomchi had new pit latrines, new schools, and other new infrastructure. But there was something wrong with these new things. The pit latrines were nice, but hardly anyone in the community used them. The school buildings were tremendous, but very few of the Pokomchi children actually attended school. Despite the successfully completed projects, the people remained desperately poor.

In his discussions with farmers, Arturo discovered that a common problem in the Pokomchi community was the lack of proper storage facilities for their harvested crops. Often, the farmers brought in a good crop only to have the rats eat it before their children could be fed. Arturo began to meet with local farmers whom he knew from church and asked them about the problem. At one point, he gathered a group of farmers together and asked, "Who is smarter, you or the rats?" "We are," they responded. "Then why do the rats keep eating all of your food?" replied Arturo. He then directed their attention to Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:15. He showed them from Scripture how men and women are uniquely created in God's image. How God is a creative God, and therefore, they have the capacity to be creative and think of creative solutions to problems like their food storage problem.

Furthermore, he showed them how mankind is to act as God's regent by exercising dominion over creation – including the rats. They discussed the meaning of the words "stewardship" and "dominion," and how a biblical understanding of these words could be applied to their situation.

These principles began to change the thinking of the farmers, and with their new mindset, they began to look at their food storage problem from a fresh perspective. Over time, they developed new food storage techniques – simple elevated corncribs. The food supply began to increase, as did the overall health of children in the community. Furthermore, the farmers understood that God’s truth not only applied to “spiritual” matters, but to very practical, everyday matters like food storage.

Questions for Farmers Participating in this Session:

1. What was the major problem faced by the farmers with regards to the storage of their maize?
2. Before Arturo’s involvement with them, what were the main beliefs of the farmers with regards to their Christian faith, their physical surroundings, their grain storage, etc.?
3. What has been your experience with these types of agricultural problems like grain storage?
4. What are some of the things that you felt when you heard the verses from the Bible that Arturo read to the farmers?
5. How do you feel about this Biblical concept of dominion?
6. What are some areas of your farm management where you are currently exercising good dominion as God’s regent?
7. What are some areas of your farm management where you could improve your exercise of good dominion?
8. What are some things in your farm management that you would like to change in the coming year?
9. How can FHI help you to make those changes?

Suggested Answers for Farmer Questions:

1. The obvious answer is the problem of rat infestation. A less obvious, but more profound answer is that the farmers had a worldview that was not redeemed by Jesus Christ and it resulted in their inability to solve the problem of rat infestation.
2. They viewed their Christian faith as only pertaining to spiritual well being and the afterlife. They viewed their surrounding in a fatalistic way—why bother to

improve their physical lives when the spirit was all that mattered. This then carried over into specific problems like rat infestation in their maize storage.

3. Answers will vary based on the farmers' experiences. The facilitator should be careful to guide this part so that the farmers do not go off on irrelevant tangents.
4. Answers will vary based on the farmers' experiences. The facilitator should be careful to guide this part so that the farmers comment on how they were impacted by hearing these things from the Bible.
5. to 9. Answers will vary. Facilitator should attempt to get a commitment from individual farmers to change in a positive way.

Questions for Facilitators Being Trained to Use this Case Study:

1. Instead of directing the farmers to Scripture, what other approaches could Arturo have taken in this situation?
2. How might those other approaches have turned out?
3. What has been your experience with this type of situation?
4. What difference did it make in this case that the farmers understood and applied the biblical principles?
5. What other biblical principles might Arturo have applied in this situation?
6. What might Arturo have done differently if there were no Christians in this community?

Suggested Answers for Facilitator Questions:

1. Like the community development workers who came before him, he could have only focused on the technical problem of inadequate food storage, and introduced new ideas or techniques for developing better storage systems.
2. The farmers may or may not have adopted the new systems. Their mindset or worldview would most likely not have been impacted. If past precedent is a good measure, then the farmers would probably not have adopted this new technology due to their fatalism and lack of concern for improving their situation in this life.
3. Answers will vary based on the facilitators' experiences.

4. It impacted their mindset or worldview, altered their perspective, and allowed them to develop solutions on their own.
5. Psalm 8:3-9
6. He may have started first with witnessing and evangelism. Once there were new Christian farmers, he could disciple them, and as part of that process, covered the biblical principles of stewardship and dominion.



ATTACHMENT #2

HOLISTIC AGRICULTURE: STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE LESSON PLAN

Date: 31 January 2003
Created by: Dave Evans
Location: Scottsdale, AZ
Credits: Sara Lim for original template of development related Bible study

Title: "If Your Land Could Speak to You"

Intended Audience: This lesson is particularly designed for farmers who are not doing a very good job of taking care of their land (especially their soil).

Time: 60 minutes

Objectives: This session is designed to change the knowledge and attitudes of farmers with regards to the care of their land. Specifically, the goal of the session is that participants will recognize that they are God's stewards who have been commissioned by Him to care for the land that he has entrusted to them. The session is not designed to provide specific skills in order for them to be able to act on the new knowledge and attitude. A subsequent session is required which would train farmers in appropriate soil conservation and/or fertilization methods to act upon this new knowledge or attitude.

Materials: Development Related Bible Study on Land Use (See Attachment). Whiteboard with marker, chalkboard with chalk, or easel with newsprint and marker. Only the facilitator will require a copy of the Bible study.

Steps:

- 1) Seat participants in a circle so that each one can see the faces of all the others in the group. If the group is too large to do this, break the group into smaller sub-groups.
- 2) Greet the participants and help them to feel relaxed by using a culturally appropriate interaction method (ice breaker, discussion about weather, tell a joke, remain quiet, etc.)
- 3) Explain to the group that you will be discovering wisdom from an ancient book and discussing how that wisdom applies to land use. The facilitator begins by asking the question ".
- 4) The facilitator should proceed through the questions according to the pace of the group. Be sure to allow for ample discussion and work toward producing an "aha" moment on the part of the participants in which they gain new knowledge and/or change their attitude about their God-given role as stewards of their land.

- 5) The facilitator should then engage the participants in a discussion about how they plan to act upon this new knowledge and/or attitude. The facilitator should take careful notes at this point in order to be able to follow up on the resolutions and commitments that are made by the participants.
- 6) Time and participant interest permitting, the facilitator may decide to conduct a follow-on session at that moment, which teaches appropriate methods for soil conservation and organic fertilization.

Proof of Knowledge/Attitude Change: At the end of the session, the participants should have an understanding of the biblical concept of stewardship, they should be able to enumerate areas of their land use where they are practicing good stewardship, areas where they need to improve their stewardship, and areas where they are willing to make a commitment to make those changes in the coming year.

Additional Notes (optional): None.

Stewardship Lesson Plan Attachment

<p>God's Word Provides a Basis for Technical Messages</p>	<p>D E V E L O P M E N T</p>	<p>R E L A T E D</p>	<p>B I B L E S T U D Y</p>
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DEVELOPMENT-RELATED BIBLE STUDY: UNCOVERING TECHNICAL TRUTH

What is it?

A Development-Related Bible study is a formal, structured study of the Bible conducted in development work settings.

What is the purpose?

The purpose of a Development-Related Bible Study is to create a bridge between a topic that might come up in the course of our work and God's truth. Our work in communities provides opportunities to discuss how God would want us to live in all areas of our lives. Development-Related Bible Study seek to take advantage of these opportunities, connecting people to God's truth.

A "Step by Step" Example which Provides a Biblical Basis for the Technical Message

Background Information:

PURPOSE: To use God's word to help redeem or restore peoples' relationship to non-human creation and work

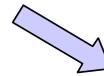
Identify

The reason why the crops grown on land that has been well cared for were more productive than the crops grown on unimproved land that has been abused.



Hear

Adam is given a holy vocation
(Genesis 1: 26-31 and 2: 15)
God commands the Israelites to give the land a rest
(Leviticus 25: 1-24)



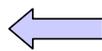
Discuss

The ways in which they can be good stewards of their land according to the Biblical principles found in the two passages.



Act

To change their land-use practices into those patterned after Biblical truth



Reflect

On the current condition of their land and their current land-use practices



A Detailed Example of a Development-Related Bible Study: Uncovering Technical Truth

INTRODUCTION:

You have seen the amount and quality of crops that are grown on degraded, unimproved land as compared to crops grown on land that has been well-cared for and improved. Take a moment and think about the difference between the land in these two cases.

Tell us some of the differences between degraded and unimproved land and land that has been well cared for and improved:

- 1.
- 2.

What do you think causes some of these differences in these two types of land?

- 1.
- 2.

There are a few passages found in the Bible which describe how our relationship with the land is governed by God's principles or laws.

Read: Genesis 1: 26-31 and 2: 15

What do you think is the most important land-use message in these passages? Why?

In your thinking, what do you think is meant by the words "have dominion over or subdue the earth"?

In your experience, is Man being obedient to God's command to be a caretaker?

What do you think is the lesson in this Bible passage?

Read Leviticus 25: 1-24

What do you think is the most important land-use message in this passage? Why?

In verse 4, God states that the land should be given a "sabbath rest". What do you think that signifies for you as a farmer?

Give an example of one way in which a farmer can help to rebuild his soil in addition to fallowing.

APPLICATION:

1. If your land could speak to you, would it thank you for being a good caretaker or chastise (scold) you for being a bad caretaker?
2. What are some things that you do to your land that signify good caretaking?
3. What are some things that you do to your land that signify bad caretaking?
4. Would you like to improve your ability to be a good "caretaker" of the land that God has entrusted to you?
5. What kind of changes would you need to make in the way you treat your land in order for it to get better?
6. Is there anyway I(we) could help you?