

God's Word and World

This is God's world, not ours. (Ps 24:1)

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Individuals own legal property, but God holds ultimate title on everything.

We are endowed by our creator; not endowed by politics, government, wealth or education. God created human beings as His image bearers "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over fish/animals".

Note: Gen 1:26 speaks of dominion, not domination. The Bible describes man as ruling as benevolent stewards who represent God. As stewards, we're responsible how we treat the earth and use it. God saw everything he made and said it was very good".

God intends for us to use and transform the natural world around us for good purposes. Adam and Eve were put in the garden and told to tend and watch over it. Gen 2: 15-16: Man is put into the garden to work and keep it. The term work denotes preparing and tending. Since this command comes before Adam sinned, work did not come as a result of sin, nor is it something to be avoided. Productive work is part of God's good purpose for man in creation. Working and transforming the earth is part of God's blessing.

The world is good but it is fallen. Rom 8:20,22: The creation was subjected to futility - - the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now". We mess things up. We pollute. We act irresponsibly. Sinners all.

We can't build God's kingdom on our own, but our actions can make a difference for good. Caring for God's creation is one of our responsibilities. Save, invest, work hard, steward.

Ideas to Facilitate God's Plan

If you want to change the world you eventually have to change how people behave. And if you want to change how they behave, you have to first change how they think. Can you name a better book than the Bible to change both man and man's thinking?

Facts, fear, and force usually do not work.

God's spirit does work. People don't resist change. They resist being changed. (sin nature?)

Search for bright spots. Make right behaviors a little easier and wrong behaviors a little bit harder. Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. (Prov. 14:34)

Big problems are rarely solved with big solutions. Small steps. Set the bar to "doable". Shrink change. Small victories. One idea at a time.

Can the situation be changed? Are individuals open to change? Plant the seeds of transformation in every sphere of life: spiritual, economic and political.

Development Puzzles in Africa and other places

Tribal Ownership. Without private ownership, no collateralization, few incentives, little hope. (similar to American Indian tribes)

Is wealth created or transferred? If transferred, then government intervention is necessary; if created, entrepreneurial efforts must be encouraged.

Many see economic trade as a zero-sum game requiring a winner and a loser rather than a win/win, mutual gains from voluntary exchange. Africans seldom share economic knowledge and information.

Most are more concerned with economic equality and wealth distribution rather than with wealth production and the incentives needed to create it.

Money – use it or lose it.

- first need has first claim
- no personal budgeting. Hoarding is anti-social; saving non-existent.
- minimal concern for accounting and good book-keeping
- uncomfortable with wealth; comfortable with equality and sharing
- most families in debt and over-extended
- overly concerned with face, shame, and honor

Cultural values that favor ambiguity, around abouts, prefer doing it tomorrow, imprecise, randomness, symbolism, fatalism, animistic, superstition and taboos are unhelpful when trying to create prosperity. Economic explanations of exploitation, colonialism, anti-capitalism and greed lead to policies of bigger welfare programs domestically and bigger foreign aid programs internationally, which only perpetrate the poverty cycle. The politics of envy is unproductive and divisive.