

Incorporating Stewardship of God's Creation into Our Daily Lives

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What if you had an opportunity to earn passive income that produced earnings 24 hours a day, even while you slept? Think rental property income or a solid 401k retirement option. No tricks or catches here. Wouldn't it make sense? In the same way, stewarding God's creation can become the 24-7, always on, outreach to others to declare our faith. When we recognize and act upon our responsibility to steward God's creation, we remove ourselves from the center of our manipulated world and instead place the glory of God's creation at the center. Many of these changes may go unnoticed, but quite a few would become observable to others. When they see those changes in the landscape and world around us all, along with the joy we as Christians have in bringing glory to God through protecting and caring for His creation, others would rightly take notice. Unlike any other evangelical effort, caring for creation can be that always on 24-7 outreach.

Become Better Stewards

As Pastor Brian mentioned, there are a number of steps we can take to become better stewards. The following five steps hardly comprise a complete list. If you are already doing these just remember, we can each strive to improve. And just as important as the steps, consider the mindset behind each step of pulling ourselves back from the center of our own worlds and intentionally thinking about God's plan with His creation. Now on to the list of putting our faith into action:

1. **Plant a garden.** Getting food may be too easy (the process, not necessarily about cost for those in challenging economic circumstances). How many of us think of the work and resources that go into those spaghetti noodles on the store shelf or vegetables in the freezer section? The goal here is not just to reduce the demand on stressed production areas, but to build in ourselves an appreciation for the everyday gifts from God we often take for granted. When planting a garden, find as many ways as possible to do so within God's design. There are natural ways to manage weeds and insects and provide nutrients.
2. **Plant trees.** Planting a tree is not only good for the environment, but it forces us to think long term. We are but a blip in time and too often we live and make decisions simply with immediacy in mind. Older generations planting trees is a huge selfless statement of love and care that brings glory to God for future generations to enjoy.
3. **Reduce the size of our lawns.** We are all products and participants in the lawn age. Certainly there is a place for lawns (notice I am not calling for their end), but lawns have come to dominate many landscapes, in the process crowding out many components of God's creation. In the US, lawns consume over 14 million acres. If it were considered a crop, it would be the sixth largest domestic "crop" by acreage. By limiting lawn size, or even planting some of our yards with native plants and flowers, we give space for all of God's creation. God intended our dominion to include a responsibility to care for all of God's creatures, from the massive to the microscopic. As an added bonus, those small creatures will often reward you with pollination services for your gardens and fruit trees. Like I mentioned, God has a really great design.
4. For farmers and gardeners, we should **strive to reduce tillage**, maximize plant diversity through more crops, and have something growing as long as possible. While we may not have the

knowledge and power to replicate the Garden of Eden, we should strive toward it and, in the process, find ways to work within God's design which declares that creation becomes fully productive when all components of His plan are allowed to flourish. When we diversify the plants we use, we limit pests, weeds and plant diseases. When we don't, pests, weeds, and diseases will seek to rebalance. It is part of God's design. Tillage has been a useful tool, but long term annual use has resulted in unsustainable erosion, declining soil health, and significant water quality problems. Some agronomic researchers have declared that at our current rate, our soils will no longer function or exist in 100 years because of tillage. And it can happen. Iraq and Syria, considered the cradle of civilization once had a thriving agriculture. They now are dominated by deserts due to erosion and soil degradation. Here again, as a bonus, when we limit or end tillage, diversify crops, or add cover crops, we allow the soil and the microorganisms to function to provide nutrients and water to our crops. I know some of these changes are big, but simply put, the practices I suggest not only solve some of the environmental problems we face, but they can work for your bottom line while making the land more productive into the future. Ask questions. Invest the time to learn, then do.

5. **Long-term structural decisions.** While I don't have any specific action here, I want to remind everyone that we all make periodic big decisions that can last a lifetime or more. When it comes to houses, appliances, vehicles, and energy we should adopt the thinking of planting a tree. Consider the long term implications on God's creation.

In *Farming that Brings Glory to God*, Craig Sorley asks: Would others be able to tell from your farm (or yard or house) that you are a follower of Christ? To be clear, Sorley is not asking about yard signs or bumper stickers. He goes as far as to ask that if we are not bringing that glory to God through stewarding and caring for God's creation, are we just Sunday Christians? Imagine the evangelical possibilities of ever-present messages declaring the Glory of God in His creation and the joy it brings to you and your family. A yard, garden, farm, or forest that is visibly different from our normal provides an opportunity to engage others about your faith while allowing creation to sing God's glory.