

The Bible Speaks To Farmers

The Bible has much to say about our relationship with creation and farmers are the primary land carers and stewards of our natural environment. If the situation in Malawi is to change, farmers need to understand the Biblical principles and have practical knowledge and skills to become better stewards of the natural resources God's has given.

Five Biblical Ways To Relate to Creation

John Wiberley shared with the groups the following five principles, based on the creation mandate God gave to humankind to rule over and subdue the earth (Ge. 1:26-30):

Called To Rule (Ge. 1:26-30, 2:17, Ps 8:3-5)

God delegated his authority to people to make use of the natural environment, to provide for our well-being. The choice? Use it wisely or abuse and exploit it. Malawi's natural resources are depleted with frightening speed. Deforestation and the consequent soil erosion are losses not easily restored (20 tons of soil per hectare lost by erosion every year).

Called To Serve As Priests (Ps 103:22, 1 Pet. 2:9, Mt. 5:13)

All things God created good and perfect. Humanity's rebellion marred and damaged it, the injury continues to deepen. Christ came as the perfect priest, to reconcile and restore. Believers are to identify with

Christ's calling to reconcile and restore, to uphold biblical creation values, to let creation be to the praise of God. A church yard littered with plastic bags, a city full of pollution, defies this calling.

Called To Companionship (Prov 12:10; 27:22-27; Ex 20:8-11)

Proper care for our animals is a Christian's calling. Are we caring when the goats roam free, feasting on other people's crops, mating with the weak or sick?

Called To Stewardship (Ge. 1:26-28; 2:17; Lk 16:10-12)

The authority to rule over creation is given to us by God. Therefore we are accountable to him as the Creator. We are to be mindful of proper environmental care for our own benefit and in obedience to God. Letting most of the rain disappear down streams and rivers, made worse by unbridled felling of trees, is irresponsible stewardship.

Called to Teamwork (Ps 65:9-13; Gen 1: 26-28; Heb. 1:3)

God continues to sustain his creation, he provides sun, water and soil for our benefit. We are asked to cooperate with him and manage his resources. How many tree seedlings have been planted in Malawi but died due to lack of management? How many Mangos have rotted but could have been sun-dried? How much top soil has been washed away due to bad land preparation, lack of contour ridging?

Our lack of wise management of God's gifts is the cause of much suffering. Let us repent of our destructive habits and make a fresh start to relate and care for creation in God's way.



VERITAS
COLLEGE
MALAWI
ZAMBIA

Praise and Prayer

We thank God

- for all the prayer and financial support received from churches and friends to run the office, supply training materials and Bibles at reduced cost, support congregation's agricultural projects and training, and all the other things we do to further the work of equipping leaders
- for Maxwell Chimkokomo, who joined us in January as the administrator and the much-needed extra office space
- donations towards our building fund

Please pray with us for

- the new opportunity to train 20 Anglican ministers as trainers in May and June

- Julia's recovery
- growing maturity in participants lives
- for gifted and godly preachers and teachers of God's Word
- for wisdom and guidance in planning our work
- land for building offices and a training centre

Opportunities to help

- Contributions, particularly in the following areas, would be much appreciated:
- Bible and training material fund
- Agricultural training and assistance fund
- Building fund to build our own offices and training centre
- Staff support
- Support for the work and staff in Zambia

From Julia Etter

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though the waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall, he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress..... Be still and know that I am God". From Psalm 46

These were the verses I read in my daily devotions on the 1st December 2005. I was in Johannesburg staying with friends and about to go to have a mammogram and cone biopsy on a lump in my breast. It was as I read this that I felt that the Lord was preparing me for something bigger than I had anticipated and was able to again pray and commit whatever I would face into His hands. That afternoon, I heard that I had breast cancer. After that things moved quickly and within a week I had had a total mastectomy and reconstruction of my right breast. Cancer cells were also found in my axillary lymph glands. When I came round after the op I was so thankful to see Martin at my bedside. He had just arrived from Malawi. Three days later I was back at Duncan and Maria Elena's house to recover. They have been really wonderful having me for eight weeks and making me part of their family. Our girls came



down for Christmas. It was good to be together again as a family. I had to recover fully before Chemotherapy and had two drains for thirty-five days. It was quite bulky but we still went out and about. Martin and I managed to go away for a couple of nights in the nearby countryside. Middle of January I had my first dose of Chemo and then returned home. Living in Malawi is complicated as I need careful monitoring. A good friend, Liz, who is a doctor in Malawi offered to help as soon as she heard my news. Liz was in Cape Town for most of the time, and she called me nearly every day. She works part time at a mission clinic here, where I am monitored. I am so thankful the insurance have agreed to cover the Chemotherapy, as at first they refused. I need six Chemo treatments in Johannesburg. The last one due in June. I must be very careful not to pick up infections due to my low white blood count. That is a challenge because everyone wants to hug or kiss me. It has been so good to be home, the family has missed me. Miriam will be taking her secondary school exams (IGCSE) in May. Rachel is doing three months language learning in Tübingen, Germany, from the 27th March. She will start at Zürich University in October. My main focus is to keep life as normal as possible in the home. I have been so overwhelmed by people's prayers, love and concern here and from all over the world, it has been a real encouragement to all of us. I really have God's peace and know that He is in control of my life.

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Dear Friends...

We want to sincerely thank you for your partnership in the gospel and share with you some of the joys and struggles of the past year.

We have continued to strive to make a contribution to what is probably the most urgent and arguably also the most important need in our

region of Africa: equipping local churches to train pastoral leaders and members for service and godly leadership; to do it in such a way as to enable many to be trained; and to make the training accessible to those with no financial means and minimal educational backgrounds.

Where we work and live - Zambia, north-western Mozambique and Malawi, is one of the poorest regions on earth and Malawi has recently made the world news again for its perennial food shortage. Yet Malawi has a climate that could certainly produce enough to feed its people. Malawi also has the advantage of huge numbers going to church. Churches are well attended, the potential for change exists. Yet we seem to be making slow headway and the nation has become



Village Scene

more impoverished over the past few years, HIV/Aids is devastating thousands of lives, people are suffering.

People agonize over the reasons for this state of affairs, millions of Dollars disappear as if simply thrown down a black whole, it is easy to become cynical with development work. What certainly the world but often the church does not recognize is this: There is

a famine of the Word of God. Bad preaching silences God, twists the truth! We have testimony after testimony of church leaders, who have done the training that Veritas offers, who confess that the preaching and teaching in the churches is of very poor quality. Moral stories, told to entertain and reprimand the common sins of smoking and drinking, are a regular Sunday diet. During one of our training courses, one of the CCAP ministers called on his fellow ministers to repent of the poor example they have been setting in their preaching.

Yet the Word of God has the power to change lives and nations. Your partnership in the gospel is doing this in many churches and lives. Read on... **Martin Etter**

Change Has Come To Stay

Interview with Rev Sidney Chiumia, March 05

What is your responsibility as an ordained minister at Mthandiza CCAP?

I oversee and pastor 25 local churches. We have 86 elders and 86 deacons to share the work with me. There are over 3000 communicant members. My wife and I have now ministered here for one year and five months.

How much training do elders and deacons received when they are elected? Usually about one day.

Since you have been here, what have you done to train these leaders?

We have completed two module 1 classes, one module 2 class, and we are about to start three module 1 and one module 2 classes. We have also just started with module 3.

What is your programme for these classes?

We meet once a week and the last meeting of the month is a prayer time.

What has particularly encouraged you since you have begun to train people here?

There has been spiritual and physical change in participants lives. Families' lives have changed. One participant says that she now depends on

prayer, whereas before she would not even think about prayer when she faced a problem. She has experienced God's help as a result of her prayers.

I have also noticed a changed attitude by the elders towards the course (people are often very suspicious of something new). They have become more cooperative, there is better teamwork, preaching has improved. Elders are becoming an example to others.

What is your vision, your hopes and dreams for the church?

I would like to see many more people trained and equipped. I would also like to train up more people to help facilitate the courses through the facilitator apprenticeship programme. The distant local churches also need the training. Ultimately, I want that many more people will know Jesus and that He is glorified!



Rev and Mrs Sidney Chiumia, Mthandiza





Participants' Testimonies

By Lyson Kamtumeni Phiri, Chamkango CCAP

I was ignorant about how to study the Bible before the course, but after completing Module 1, I have been equipped. My spirituality has dramatically changed. Now I understand who God is and how he communicates with his people and how to communicate with God through prayer. In addition, I know how to lead a Bible study and how to preach. What makes me feel very proud is that, through the Veritas training, I have come to accept Jesus Christ, that he came and died on the cross because of my sins. I pledge to continue with Module 2. Please keep it up Veritas! We are with you in prayers. (shortened ed.)



Participant Lezita Mulande, Mthandiza

By Lezita Mulande, Mthandiza CCAP

Veritas College was introduced in January 2005 here at Mthandiza CCAP. Thirty-one participants registered for Module 1, including eight women. Through the course I have been greatly helped in many areas, especially in how to interpret the Bible. After completion, I couldn't prevent myself from jumping into Module 2! This has also helped deepen my spiritual life. Then there was the 'Full Grain Store' workshop in September 2005, organised by Veritas and hosted by our congregation. The invited facilitator was Prof. John Wibberley (RURCON). The objective was to integrate our daily activities of farming and business with the Word of God. 'Happy and healthy bodies can better praise the Lord'. I was really blessed by this. We learnt about farmers study groups and I agree that together we can achieve more. So we have started several different groups, e.g. vegetable growers group, poultry group, cassava group. I praise the Lord for all these activities in our church and I am grateful to the Lord and wish to study all the Veritas modules. (shortened ed.)

Veritas College In Zambia

Frederick Bwalya, our team leader in Zambia, says this about the work there. "God is indeed using Veritas College as a tool to equip the body of Christ. People are hungry for the Word of God and proper preaching and teaching of the Word of God is the answer to such hunger. We have noticed one thing as we run the Veritas training in different churches. People feel like now they have what they go to church for – the actual Word of God.

A Testimony By Pastor Jonathan Kamuna Matendeko From Zambia:

Personally I do not know how to thank God for what Veritas College has done to my life and my church. I do not regret being trained as a facilitator because I can see that my local leaders have benefited a lot through the training I am giving them. In the past two years my church has recorded tremendous growth both spiritually and numerically. Glory be to God! This is fulfilling my heart's desire and filling up the vacuum I once had. I can see that the Veritas programme is what we need in our church. I share the Word of God without any fears because I have the secret of what it



Trainer Follow-up meeting in Lusaka, Zambia

takes to be a man approved of God. The world today needs God's truth which will set them free and it takes preachers, who have gained the knowledge we have through Veritas College, to present it to them. (shortened ed.)



Facilitator Apprentice Weekend with Swiss visitors

Participant Numbers

Since August 2005 in Malawi:
533 new participants started Module 1
226 participants started in Modules 2-4

Totals since work started in MW, ZAM, MOZ
1567 Participants completed one or more modules
175 Trainers completed one or more modules
25 Facilitator Apprentices in training

The Veritas Training Modules

The modules are often mentioned in testimonies. So here is a brief overview of the main skills covered.

Module 1:
Introduction and basic skills to interpret the Bible
How to interpret the Epistles
How to lead a Bible study group
How to preach

Module 2:
Skills to interpret the Pentateuch and OT historical books
How to communicate a biblical message with children

Module 3:
Skills to interpret the Wisdom and Prophetic books
How to counsel from Scripture
Module 4:
Skills to interpret the Gospels, Acts and Revelation
How to develop a strategy for church life

There are many other subjects linked with these skills. The emphasis of the training is to enable people to handle the Word of God accurately and give them the skills to understand, apply and communicate the message of Bible.

'Nkhokwe Yodzaza' (Full Grain Store) Workshops



Nkhokwe Yodzaza Workshop with Prof. John Wibberley

In September 2005, Prof. John Wibberley (RURCON) joined us to facilitate five workshops in rural congregations. The focus was the development of the congregation both spiritually and physically, through a process of analysis and vision building. It involved a review of all that a church community does and has, including the natural resources common to any farming community. The book of Nehemiah provided principles to mobilize the community for development.

Food scarcity and malnutrition are common experiences for

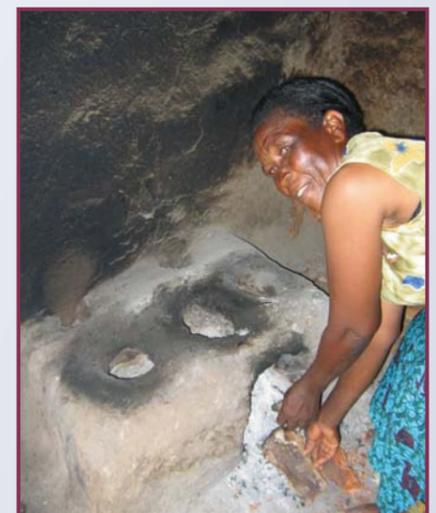


Participant, Cassava grower group

many Malawians, yet Malawi is a country with plenty of sun, usually good rainfall, a once-fertile soil and hard working people. So what's causing the perennial problem? Among a number of reasons is the type of agriculture that has been pushed for the past four decades. The emphasis has been on growing maize and tobacco. Environmental concerns and sustainable agricultural methods seem not have been of great consequence. There has been a recent change of heart and policymakers are advocating other ways. Yet change is never easy or quick and often the spiritual hindrances are not addressed by those working to introduce change.

Over the past years, working with many rural congregations, the need for diversification, organic and environmentally friendly farming became very obvious to us. Although this is not our main focus, we have not been able to stand by as people suffer. Three years ago, we began to support small scale farming projects undertaken by the congregations where our Bible and leadership training is running. We have seen where spiritual change is happening through the training, there is also 'fertile soil' for change in practical areas like farming.

It is encouraging to see what is happening as participants' lives are impacted through the training and the workshops. At Mthandiza CCAP, the training has made a difference. There is more prayer and new ideas have taken root - three farmer's study groups have started. This season again, from donations of Veritas friends, we have been able to help 10 congregations with agricultural projects.



Participant made simple stove, saves 50% of fire wood and thus Malawian Forests