



JOHN·RAY·INITIATIVE
Connecting Environment, Science and Christianity

in association with



Mission and Creation Care for Christian Disciples

Leaders' notes

These notes are designed to be used as support for those leading the group discussions outlined in the booklet for participants. The booklet for participants, with additional copies of these notes, can be freely downloaded from www.jri.org.uk and www.tearfund.org/campaigns

1. Renewing our understanding of mission

Mission involves the whole person engaging with the whole of creation - all that I am, all that I see, hear, say, smell, touch and think as I experience the place where I live and the world of which I am a part.

It has been said that Christians need to experience three conversions: a conversion to Christ; a conversion to Christ's body on earth, the church; and a conversion to the world for which Christ died. As a response Christians need to move beyond a personal relationship with Jesus (the vital first step on the journey of discipleship) and respond to Jesus' challenge to be his church, and to join in his mission in the power of the Spirit (John 20:21-22).

Christ centred: Colossians 1:15-20

Mission is focused on the Cross where Christ confronts the powers of evil in the world, including the abuse and misuse of political and economic power. The Cross highlights the struggle for justice, and presents the offer of forgiveness leading to a renewed relationship with God.

Jesus summed up the whole law as to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul and with all our mind, and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:37,39) and John recalled that the purpose of Christ's mission is that God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). God's love and salvation is for the world: not only people, but the whole natural environment, which is also suffering (Romans 8:19-23).

We are challenged to embrace a way of living, which stems from our relationship with God, and which is rooted in prayer, worship and reflection on the Bible, whereby the church communicates the Gospel through everything it *is*, *does*, and *says*. This is not so that the church might become rich materially nor powerful politically, but rather to incarnate the values of the kingdom of God.

Living worship: Romans 11:33-12:2

We are challenged by the Apostle Paul to live our lives as our worship of God (Romans 12:1-2), and to be those who do the work of God (Ephesians 2:8-10). So we can define mission in terms of our everyday lives, where living is worship, and being is mission. In this we live as imitators of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; Ephesians 5:1-2), and as those created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) to take care of creation (Genesis 2:15). Our desire is to create a sustainable and just world where people and communities flourish, and come to know the love of Christ.

This would be a world where we will have an economy which serves our society rather than being our master. We will keep ourselves (and therefore the economy) within the natural limits of the earth, carefully stewarding it as God's creation. Our goal is to create societies throughout the world where justice, an equal sharing of resources and assets, physical and mental health, education, and participation in all areas of political and economic life are the marks of successful development. Such a way of living is the context for mission that is holistic.

Restored relationships: Genesis 2:4-3:24

Christian disciples are called to participate in the mission of Christ. Central to this mission is the redemption of creation. In Genesis 1-3 we see that the God of the covenant, the sustainer and redeemer of Israel, is the creator of the universe. Genesis 1 presents a picture of a world with which God is pleased, and human beings in God's image, reflect the nature of God. Genesis 2 shows us the relationships God desires in a world that is good: human relationships with God, with each other, and with the environment. But in Genesis 3 we find that human rebellion and self-centredness leads to the breaking of these three relationship and results in God's judgement on humanity and the world.

Genesis 1-11 presents us with the picture of God the creator and covenant maker; the Psalms express creation's praise (cf. Psalm 19; 104); and the Prophets describe human rebellion in breaking the covenant and the resulting destruction of creation (see Isaiah 24:1-6). Our true hope is in God's covenant with all creation, which assures us that God will maintain his purposes in spite of human wickedness (Genesis 8:21-22). God will not destroy the earth, but in God's grace the cycle of day and night and of crops and seasons will continue. It is clear that hope is based on God's grace alone, and God's promise never again to flood the earth.

We are created for relationship including the care of creation, but human self-centredness leads to a fall from God's grace, broken relationships and a lack of care for both people and creation. Hence Jesus' summation of the laws of the Old Covenant (Matthew 22:37, 39) - his call to maintain those relationships with God, with each other and with creation. We are called into a renewed covenant relationship in Christ and we are sent out on God's mission by Christ in the power of the Spirit (Matthew 28:16-20; John 20:21-22).

A creation in desperate need of redemption waits for human beings to recover their Christ-like humanity (Romans. 8:19-23). We look for the restoring of God's image in human beings and in the whole of creation, through restored relationships, justice and equality. This is at the heart of our participation in the mission of Christ.

Kingdom people: Mark 8:34-38

We are called to live as Kingdom people living within the hope that the Gospel will transform society by the activity of the Spirit. As such, we are called to be radical: looking outwards at the needs of the world and adopting a radical agenda that seeks to live out Gospel values.

The call of Christ is expressed as 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8.34). This is a different sort of life, a Christ-like life, a life that is 'in Christ'. So to be involved in Christ's redemptive mission – for Christ's redeeming love to flow through us, in the power of the Spirit we must:

Deny self: live more simply, move away from a selfish materialistic life style, use less of the world's resources; treat the created order with care.

Take up the cross: the cross-shaped life of sacrificial love, live sacrificially for the sake of others; give up our greed; sacrifice our wants

Follow Jesus: in his compassion for others and for the world, see the created world as an expression of God's order and love; see everyone as equally valued by God; take special care of the poor and the outcast; and love our neighbour as ourselves.

We must avoid the self-centred individualistic ideas of happiness and consumption, where growth is seen as a virtue expressed in consumerism and personal satisfaction. Hope requires a broader perspective of a world-wide community and nature's renewal. We need to reverse the broken relationships of the 'fall'. Our hope is set on that which is above, but brought into the present through transformative living on the part of the people of God. We seek to plant seeds of transformation (Jeremiah 29:4-7; 32:1-15) in the here and now - political, economic, ecological, and social seeds.

Christians are the people who pray 'Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' We are following Jesus and joining him in his mission of shaping the world, in the power of the Spirit. The outworking of mission is seen in living as Kingdom people: Luke 4:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Romans 8:18-25; Colossians 1:15-20.

In the New Testament we read of Christ as co-creator and as redeemer of creation (John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-20). The post-resurrection church lives in the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:20; 3:14-21) and we are called into God's redemptive activity (Romans 8:18-25). Christians have resurrection life now (John 11:25-26), which is eternal life (John 6:34ff and John 10:10) or life in Christ (Romans 6:3,11; 8:1) or the experience of the presence of the Kingdom in their midst (Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20; 17:21).

2. The call to care for creation

In recent years there has been an almost universal recognition of the destruction that human beings are inflicting on the planet. Fish stocks, ocean plankton, and the rain forests are being destroyed; irreplaceable natural resources are being consumed; and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) are increasing at an alarming rate.

In the 1980s scientists coined the phrase ‘global change’ to demonstrate their conclusion that human impact on the environment is neither temporary nor benign, as we are altering the basic functioning of the earth’s systems. As the ‘environmental footprint’ of the richer nations is greater than the poor in both consumption and pollution, it appears unlikely that democratic governments will preserve the environment. Only a reduction in the extraction of fossil fuels will reduce emissions.

Michael Northcott in his book, *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (London: SPCK, 2014), contrasts the concept of commons (communal sharing) with that of sovereignty (ownership). While we can speak of the air and oceans as commons, placing limits on pollution infringes the property rights of global corporations (ownership). This has resulted in international discussions around emission credits and permits, which in effect gives a market price to pollution.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change urges the world to see that we cannot go on the way we are and predicts that the ‘business as usual’ approach will see a 7°C rise in global surface temperature by 2100. This will not be a new world, but one in which global capitalism will have collapsed, with the world’s major cities under water. The Lausanne Movement for Global Evangelisation in its consultation in Jamaica in 2012 came to two primary conclusions; a) that creation care is a Gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ, and b) that we are faced with an urgent global crisis which is affecting all peoples and all ecosystems. While the money markets pour investment into many industries which are polluting the earth, individuals and community projects are providing an alternative approach through such developments as transition towns, eco-congregations, and community solar power projects.

A biblical mandate: Genesis 8:22-9:17

From the Genesis account of creation we recognise that order is at the heart of God; it is God’s nature. Creation is an expression of God’s creative purpose and of God’s character. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 present a picture of the beginnings of the universe and of this world. We find the biblical declaration that God created it, God ordered it, God loved it, and God was pleased with it. With such affirmation of God’s purposes, we, who claim to worship God, should be concerned about the environment.

The first covenant, of which we read in the Bible, is made by God with Noah (Genesis 6:11-9:17). God commanded Noah to conserve nature (6:19). After the Flood God establishes his covenant with all of creation (9:8-14). God’s saving of creation is seen in God’s heart, as he remembers Noah. The land is still to be fertile. But, the new covenant after the flood reminds us that we are always looking from the side of a broken creation, which will finally be redeemed in Christ. Covenant, in Hebrew *berit*, shares a root with the Genesis word to describe divine creativity, in Hebrew *bara*. This root has the sense of ‘binding;’ through God’s gracious love, creation is bound by the everlasting covenant to the sovereign God, and all creatures are bound to each other in a web of interrelationship.

God’s good creation is in a state of *shalom*, which is peace, harmony and integrity (see Isaiah 11, 24, 32, 55; Psalms 89 and 104). A new and redeemed creation in Christ will exhibit the same characteristics (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:18-23; Colossians 1:15-21; Revelation 21). Our true hope is in God’s covenant with all creation (Genesis 8:21-9:17) and his promise to make all things new (Revelation 21:5).

But we, who are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), have a mandate to care for creation. Such stewardship is difficult, but we are not on our own, we act in partnership with God, through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Practically, the stewardship of the earth is beset by problems of human selfishness and greed which lead to overexploitation of the earth's resources, and by human impotence – we know what to do, but lack the will to do it. This is a spiritual problem. The 'groaning of creation' (Romans 8:18-23) is not a scientific problem but is based far more profoundly on human beings striving for power and control. As God's image bearers, we share in God's care of creation, and as we share in the Eucharist, sharing Christ's mission, Christians have a duty to live out God's call to self discipline and restraint.

God's gift of this world: 'the earth is the Lord's'

From the Old Testament we understand that the land is God's gift to human beings (Genesis 1&2; Psalm 24:1; Leviticus 25:1-34). The ordering of the six days of creation and the seventh day (the Sabbath) of finishing, resting and hallowing is a rhythm, which we should not disrupt if we are to live in the ways in which we have been created by God. The seventh day is important as the place where we can enter into creation and participate in God's creative pattern of work and rest.

We need to understand that time is not a commodity but a gift. Contemplation of creation is important. The Sabbath rest command is focused and reproduced in our lives through worship. There is an intimate connection between the world of creation and the world of worship. We enter the gift of the rhythm of time in the midst of our messy existence, a rhythm where the Spirit of God is bringing about creation and salvation.

Sabbath and Jubilee (seven times seven years, the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee - Leviticus 25:8-10) give three principles for farming and food production: sharing – with the poor; caring – for the earth; and restraint – of power and wealth. Jubilee was intended to protect the small householder and also served to establish an economic practice for redeeming the land and the people. But Peter Carruthers ('Creation and the Gospels' in Sarah Tillett (editor) *Caring for Creation. Biblical and theological perspectives*, Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2005) notes that today there are imbalances in the world food system, there is unfair trading, and a growing industrialization of agriculture, which is destroying the environment. We might also suggest that we take a sabbath rest in the extraction of fossil fuels. Instead of keeping the Sabbath we have a Sabbath-less society.

Redemption in Christ: John 1:1-14; 3:16-21

In Christ God is redeeming creation, which he loves (John 3:16) and he calls us to share his attitude (Matthew 22:37-40). Our love and worship cannot be fully expressed unless we care for creation and seek justice for those affected by our treatment of creation.

God is love and created all things in love, and creation comes into being through the Word of God, who became incarnate in human form (John 1.1-14). God assumes human form in space and time to redeem creation. Our true humanity is located in Christ, and when we locate ourselves outside Christ we find ourselves in disharmony with God's purpose for the well-being of creation.

From the Gospel we learn that our approach to creation should be holistic and not dualistic (separating out human beings as above the rest of the world), and that recognizes God's relationship with creation. God is present in creation as well as being transcendent. We can

address a holistic approach through our celebration of the Sabbath principle, which breaks us free from the chains of ownership and consumerism. We share God's gracious care for the whole world rather than seeking a self-centred control.

In the Bible we recognize that the Creator is the Covenant God and Redeemer God, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. In union with Christ, Christians are invited into fellowship and partnership in God's mission in and for the world. As we adopt this role God invites us to share in his creative and redemptive mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Finding our place in Christ's mission: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

When we consider the slow progress of the numerous UN conferences on climate change, it becomes clear that fallen human beings lack the will and the wisdom to fully commit in the caring of creation. We find it difficult to put aside our own self interest, and we don't always know what is best for creation. We will find God's best way by living with God's wisdom (Proverbs 8) and Word, Christ (John 1:1-14), which is shown in Scripture to provide a source of wisdom and transformation for this work. We need to be in tune with God's wisdom through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We have seen that the central theme of creation care is found in the Old Testament principles of 'Covenant', 'Sabbath', and 'Jubilee', which define both personal and community responses to God and actions in following his pattern for a fulfilled life and flourishing society. In our attitude toward creation we are accountable to God. Therefore when we look at the ways in which we treat creation, other human beings and the environment we find the themes of sin, justice and redemption (Isaiah 24:1-5; Joel 2:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5).

We are not spectators of creation but participants in it. As the Apostle Paul challenges, we are new creations in Christ and as such are called to be reconciled with God and channels of reconciliation in the world (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). We join in Christ's mission of reconciliation (Colossians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20). Therefore, a Christian approach to creation care will ask: what does the Bible say, but also how do we live to glorify Jesus and to serve the world with the Gospel?

Tom Wright, in his book *The Challenge of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2000), argues that in Christ God's final consummation has begun, and that we, in Christ, cannot be indifferent to suffering or overlook present injustices resulting from other factors, such as colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization, by focusing on a future heavenly bliss. Such a realisation will transform the lifestyles of Christians and guide us to live sacrificially cross-shaped lives, which look to the needs of others. We live as those who know that the current reality of the world challenges the God-given responsibility to neighbours both local and global, and to the care of creation.

3. Sustainable lifestyle

The spiralling consumption, chiefly of the developed nations is unsustainable and the world's natural resources are rapidly being exhausted. We must challenge the view that increasing wealth is the measure of progress and human well-being, and recognise that human flourishing is not merely a matter of economic growth, but is marked by creativity, productive lives, responsibility, fruitful relationships, and a generosity of spirit.

The current approach of free market economics will ultimately fail as observed by Brian McLaren (*Everything Must Change*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), who believes that the deepest prophetic task is for us to build communities that will survive within a suicidal world. McLaren describes three sub-systems that make up a global suicide machine: the prosperity system, which fulfils our desire for more and more happiness, which is achieved by consuming more and more. But as there isn't enough for everyone there will be jealousy and violence, and so we need protection. We need the security system, which protects our prosperity system with weapons, intelligence, border controls, police and surveillance, for which we need personnel and weapons, at a significant cost. This cost must be shared. So to the equity system, which shares the cost of the security system making sure that everyone has the possibility of happiness. But in reality everyone is paying for the security of the prosperous. We are in a suicidal tail spin, for even when we have our wealth and security it is no guarantee of happiness.

We live in a world where global health and education are gradually improving, but unjust economic systems and unfair trade, lack of access to clean water, and degradation of ecosystems through climate change are mitigating against an increase in human well-being. To the comment that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, we add that the whole of creation is suffering.

The image of God:

We human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26):

- in our capacities - rationality, morality, self-awareness, and creativity;
- in our abilities - working, taking care, and reflecting God's love; and
- in our relationships - with God, with each other, and with the whole of creation.

The single-minded pursuit of economic growth devalues the social, cultural and environmental relationships in which we are embedded and on which we depend. This single-minded pursuit is rooted in an underlying confusion about what it means to be human. Economic growth for its own sake has become an unhealthy obsession.

In the image of God human beings are made for generosity, giving ourselves to others as God has given himself to us. This is marked by enabling others to be creative, productive, responsible and generous; allowing others to participate in and contribute to society.

Creation:

Creation is a gift, the land which we farm and mine, and on which we live is a gift from God. The Old Testament principles of Sabbath and Jubilee, discussed in Study 2, express the limits that God has placed on our enjoyment of the land. But when we fail to adhere to the limits set by God through our sinful self-centredness we find that the environment and its people are under threat.

Creation is to be enjoyed and celebrated in praise, but we are accountable to God - we live life within limits set by God. There are limits to the earth's capacity to sustain diverse and flourishing life. We need to adhere to the Sabbath rest and should not work against God's command to the natural living world to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:22), for if our flourishing leads to the extinction of others then we cannot be ruling in God's image.

Individual Christian Discipleship: Matthew 5:3-16; Luke 6:17-26

Christian disciples are challenged to Christ-like living - Mark 8:34; Matthew 22:37-40; and Matthew 5:1-12 the Sermon on the Mount, which as Donald Kraybill describes is 'the upside-down Kingdom', where the world's values are turned on their head (*The Upside-Down Kingdom*, Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1978). When we believe that human flourishing is based on the acquisition of wealth together with the freedom to make selfish choices, we are basing our lifestyle on a vision that is inadequate and ultimately harmful to the majority of the world's population.

What marks out a Christian lifestyle as different? Dave Bookless of A Rocha UK writes in his book, *Planetwise. Dare to Care for God's World*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2008)

If we are to worship God with heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbours as ourselves, then we need to change our lifestyles radically. At present, the average Briton uses such a large amount of the earth's resources that we would need more than three planet earths if everybody in the world wanted to live the same way. This is both an issue of justice for the world's poor and an issue of worship, as this excessive consumerism is actually an idolatry of greed, pure spiritual cholesterol.

And we are also building up our physical levels of cholesterol! Changing our lifestyle will not be easy. Dave Bookless suggests 'Living Lightly' believing that living sustainably is part of Christian worship and mission. Living lightly includes:

- living lightly in using resources as a matter of justice
- examining and changing my values, choices and lifestyle decisions
- joining with others in community in modelling a sustainable way of living

To these we may wish to add a concern for the poorest of the world; a commitment to the purchase of fairly traded goods (although we may also need to examine the sustainability of the transport of these goods); and encouraging government action to achieve such ends. We should not seek to live lightly out of duty, fear or guilt but out of love: love for our neighbours, love for our fellow creatures, love for future generations, and, at the deepest level of all, love for God.

As Companies, Corporations and Communities: James 5:1-6

Sustainable development requires behavioural change, which many people refuse to put into practice. We might suggest that business success be judged on financial, societal and environmental grounds, rather than the 'bottom line' which purely measures the financial performance of the company. To this we will add political decisions and technological developments. The ethics of sustainability will include a balance between the intrinsic value of nature and the needs of humankind in ways which are economically viable and affordable.

In the developing world we should encourage the spreading and deepening of the faith; community building; helping people to face fundamental life questions; and developing sustainable methods of farming. But in doing this we should ensure that the voices of the poor are heard in decision-making that impacts radically upon them. They are often the ones who grasp in tangible ways what it means to live in partnership with creation.

The focus on individual freedom and wealth creation by western governments, the media, and multi-national businesses has resulted in people like us being disconnected from social, cultural and environmental relationships. This has led to environmental degradation, inequalities in wealth, health and education, and political impotence.

The New Testament church was radical in its treatment of women, children, and the poor and needy. We, the church today, are challenged to promote human flourishing. The key to helping others to develop sustainable communities is to empower them to bring themselves out of poverty. On a global scale we look for fair trade and free trade - free of tariff barriers and unfair subsidies. We should encourage policy makers to travel to rural and marginal urban areas where statistics have names and faces, and where they can encounter real people in their everyday struggles. This is true of discovering people's needs in the UK as well as countries in the developing world.

Justice: Amos 5:21-6:7; Micah 6:6-8

God states that his desire is for us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). Justice is the same for everyone (Leviticus 24:22); it involves defending the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:9); and of women, orphans and aliens (Zechariah 7:10-11). God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power (Psalm 68:4-5), and so should we.

Justice includes generosity (Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 15:4-11; Isaiah 58:6-7; Matthew 6:1-2) which is rich, full and open-handed, and freely given. The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) challenges us to understand that Jesus refused to set us limits on how or who we should love. We act this way because all people are created in the image of God; God is the creator of all and a lack of generosity refuses to acknowledge that we are not our own but God's; and we ourselves have found redemption in God's grace and act accordingly (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26).

For the oppressed and disadvantaged, who have no hope nor future prospects, the Gospel declares that they, like us, are not defined by outside forces, but that we all count, we are loved unconditionally and infinitely irrespective of anything we have or have not achieved.

4. Biblical economics

A great deal of power in the modern world is located in global corporations rather than governments, and many poorer nations and communities feel powerless. The economics of the free market are not value free and economic growth for its own sake is not value free. We need to encourage businesses and economic advisers to understand a biblical view of individual persons, human well-being, and wealth creation. We need to encourage Christians to move away from the individualistic 'me and Jesus' mentality and recognise that following Jesus affects all aspects of life and work, business and pleasure. Biblical economics involves living as channels of Christ's redemptive love in and for the world.

I was privileged during my time as President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain to be invited to St Paul's, London to hear Gordon Brown and Kevin Rudd (then Prime Ministers of the UK and Australia) speak about the Millennium Development Goals at a pre-G20 event in March 2009. They both gave their view, from a Christian perspective, on the values and

morals that the governments of the world needed to adopt in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals are: to end poverty and hunger; to achieve universal education; to strive for gender equality; to improve child health; to prioritise maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS; to attain environmental sustainability; and to establish global partnership.

Gordon Brown expressed his view that the free market had become the setting for self-interest, where financial operators have become 'free-loading free-marketeers' - as recent events have sadly proved. He went on to state that markets need morals and we can no longer speak of the 1980s 'TINA', there is no alternative. Instead we must speak of 'THEMBA', there must be an alternative; 'themba' is Zulu for 'hope'.

Kevin Rudd added that the god of the financial system has been found to be false and self-serving, and that 'market values' have been revealed as the 'Golden Calf' of our age. He believed that to our values of security, liberty and prosperity, we must add equity, sustainability and community. As such fair trade, overseas aid and addressing climate change must remain priorities on our agenda.

Biblical pointers:

i) Sabbath. Deuteronomy 5:12-15

One of the great gifts that the Judaeo-Christian tradition can give to sustainable living is the concept of Sabbath. Not just a pause for breath before carrying on consuming, and not just for humans. In Genesis 1, we find that the crown of creation is not humankind, created on the sixth day, but the Sabbath, instituted on the seventh day, when God took a rest, and God did not do so because God was tired, but to set us an example. The Mosaic covenant commands regular jubilee seasons when debts are forgiven, families reunited, and land left fallow. We wear ourselves, and the land, out by constant activity with little time for reflection on the meaning of life, our relationships, and especially our relationship with God. In his book *To Heal a Fractured World, the ethics of responsibility* (London: Continuum, 2005) Jonathan Sacks expresses the vital place of the Sabbath for Jews:

On the Sabbath, we do not work, nor are we permitted to employ others to work. All relationships of hierarchy and dominance are temporarily suspended, one day in seven. During the six weekdays, we think of ourselves as creators. On the seventh, we become aware that we are also creations - part of the natural world order, whose integrity we are bidden to respect. The Sabbath is thus the most compelling tutorial in human dignity, environmental consciousness, and the principle that there are moral limits to economic exchange and commercial exploitation. It is one of the great antidotes to commercialization and commodification.

To rest on the seventh day, therefore, is not just to have time off work, it is to remember who we are, what we are, and why we are here. Every aspect of our lives individually and collectively are to be viewed in the light of the Creator's intentions for us. How we spend our time determines the quality of our lives, as well as the quality we can add to the lives of others.

The seventh day of rest that recognises the Creator; the seventh year, when the land is given rest, left fallow to recover its nutrients; and the seven times seven, fiftieth year of Jubilee, when debts are cancelled, slaves set free, and the equal division of land restored (Leviticus

23:3; 25:1-31). The law of Jubilee did not prevent ownership and buying of property, but it did impose accountability to God and the redress of inequality.

The technical control of time (departing from the natural God-given rhythms) is human-centred and takes our times away from a relationship with the creator. The Old Testament prophets criticized the people for breaking the covenant through their unjust treatment of the poor and the vulnerable, and through their failure to care for the land, such as God's warning given by Isaiah (Isaiah 24:5-6). The exclusion of the poor and the degradation and exhaustion of the environment are seen as the results of ignoring God's care of creation and God's justice expressed in the Covenant.

ii) Rich Christians. Luke 12:13-21

Christians are the new covenant community in Christ. Jesus declared the Sabbath and Jubilee principle at the beginning of his ministry as recorded in Luke 4:18-19. Luke directly addresses rich Christians who might be wondering how they get into the Kingdom of God, where Jesus says 'Happy are the poor'. Luke in his pastoral concern offers Jesus' guidance for rich Christians through the story of Zacchaeus (19:1-10); the parable of the rich fool (12:13-21); the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31); the Good Samaritan (10:30-37); and the shrewd manager (16:1-12), which are only found in Luke's account of the Gospel. Here Jesus offers guidance for how to deal with wealth. For example in Luke 12:13-21 the rich fool's ambitious planning focuses on a desire to secure himself independent of any reliance on God. In the letter of James (4:13-15) the business people are condemned because they prefer to develop their money-making plans rather than placing their lives in God's hands; and in the Book of Revelation (chapter 18) the kings of the earth are seduced by the wealth created by the imperial economic practices of the kingdom set against God. Paul recognises all of these aspects of a world running away from God, where poverty is rooted in broken relationships and the Roman Empire set against God, encouraging the Colossian Christians to see that God has reconciled all things in creation to himself in Christ (Colossians 1:15-20).

iii) Gleaning. Leviticus 19:9-16

The Jews of the Old Testament were not to harvest to the edges of their fields, but leave some of the grain, grapes or olives for the poor to collect' the principle of gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10). We might ask whether or not this is a pattern for business owners to follow today? The Mosaic laws of gleaning, releasing, tithing and Jubilee present the biblical attitude toward wealth and possessions. These do not fit into any of the normal categories of our modern capitalist system.

In his book *Generous Justice. How God's grace makes us just* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012) Timothy Keller picks up the principle of gleaning and suggests that modern companies should not squeeze every penny of profit out of their businesses for themselves by charging the highest possible fees and prices to customers and paying the lowest possible wages to workers. Instead companies should lower prices, pay higher wages, and share corporate profits with employees and customers. This should also include the wages paid to workers located in developing countries producing merchandise for the developed world. The success of the employee profit-sharing by the John Lewis Partnership is a good example; and the challenge for companies to pay the living wage rather than the minimum wage is a step on the way.

While poverty may often be the result of selfish individualism or the enhancement of shareholder profits rather than concern for the common good, the Bible also identifies natural

disasters and personal moral failures, including idleness, as causes. People must take responsibility for their own actions (Jer. 29:29-30), and internationally governments should provide aid to areas suffering the effects of natural disasters.

A blueprint for ethical business:

What might sustainability look like at the level of a business or corporation? One example might be the Harvard Business School 'Class of 2009' MBA Oath (see <http://mbaoath.org/>): a voluntary pledge developed by the Graduates, to 'create value responsibly and ethically.'

The Oath:

As a business leader I recognize my role in society.

- My purpose is to lead people and manage resources to create value that no single individual can create alone.
- My decisions affect the well-being of individuals inside and outside my enterprise, today and tomorrow.

Therefore, I promise that:

- I will manage my enterprise with loyalty and care, and will not advance my personal interests at the expense of my enterprise or society.
- I will understand and uphold, in letter and spirit, the laws and contracts governing my conduct and that of my enterprise.
- I will refrain from corruption, unfair competition, or business practices harmful to society.
- I will protect the human rights and dignity of all people affected by my enterprise, and I will oppose discrimination and exploitation.
- I will protect the right of future generations to advance their standard of living and enjoy a healthy planet.
- I will report the performance and risks of my enterprise accurately and honestly.
- I will invest in developing myself and others, helping the management profession continue to advance and create sustainable and inclusive prosperity.

In exercising my professional duties according to these principles, I recognize that my behaviour must set an example of integrity, eliciting trust and esteem from those I serve. I will remain accountable to my peers and to society for my actions and for upholding these standards.

5. The Church as an agent of change

We are following Jesus and joining him in his mission of shaping the world, in the power of the Spirit. The Kingdom of God is characterised by God's values, a way of life made possible in Christ, and we are called to live as Kingdom people living within the hope that the Gospel will transform society by the activity of the Spirit. We live between the Cross and the Second Coming of Christ working as Gospel people to restore the broken relationships of the Fall - with God, with each other, and with the environment. We are engaged in the active transformation of an unredeemed world. The Kingdom of God involves the whole of life - restoring physical, social, economic and environmental needs. We are called to be radical:

looking outwards at the needs of the world and adopting a radical agenda that recognises where Gospel values are absent in politics, business, economics, and even the church. While governments, businesses and civil society can seek the transformation of society, the church has a unique approach and a unique role in seeking to bring Gospel values to a world out of step with its creator. Perhaps the most critical task for the church in our generation is to offer society a compelling alternative to the unjust distribution of wealth and opportunity in the world, and a more contented lifestyle to a consumer culture.

Evangelism: Matthew 25:31-46

Some will say that the primary task of the church is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an unbelieving world. But as the apostle James wrote (James 2:14-26), we demonstrate our faith through our actions. In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) Jesus implies that salvation comes through serving the poor and needy. This may sound like salvation through good works, but the emphasis in this parable is on our relationship to the Kingdom and the King, and it is on this that judgement is based. A Gospel that does not show itself in the reality of Christ-like living is no Gospel.

Yet the apostle Paul states that it is by grace that we are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but if we stop at this verse we miss the completion of Paul's understanding that we are saved to do the works God has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). The heart of Christianity is a relationship with Jesus, which shows itself in loving, sacrificial care for others, in particular the poor and the needy. This is the call of Christ, the call to love (Matthew 22:37-40); to follow Jesus' example of servant ministry (John 13:3-17); and to deny self, take up the life of sacrificial cross-shaped love, in following Jesus (Mark 8:34).

Christ identified with the poor; each human being is lovingly created in the image of God and Christ, the true shepherd of the sheep, identifies with each person in his death upon the Cross, and as such is to be found in each human being that we encounter in this world. We are called to live in a way where the Gospel influences our lives by the activity of the Spirit. When it comes to evangelism and social action Matthew presents us with two limits. He tells us that it is all down to God's grace, God's free gift (20:1-15), and that we are accountable for how we live (25:40,45).

To read the Sermon on the Mount in a deprived urban priority area or in a favela in Brazil, is to have a different set of questions asked of the reader, and will produce a different set of emotional responses to the text. The crucial questions of our time, whether they be about urban deprivation, developing world debt, climate change or ethnic warfare, are unlikely to be addressed sharply enough by the conventional biblical exegesis offered to suburban churches in western countries. We need to learn through the eyes of people in the developing world, which we may well find to be unsettling. Once we let the Bible address the social, economic and political attitudes and decisions of our own country, we will be challenged to commit ourselves to the transformation of lives and society through living out our faith in Christ. In the words attributed to St Francis of Assisi: 'Always remember to preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words'.

Gospel presence: 1 Peter 2:1-11

While governments, businesses and civic organisations can seek the transformation of society, the church has a unique approach and a unique role in seeking to bring Gospel values to a world out of step with its creator.

The church works in civic society to encourage and enable human flourishing and the protection of communities and environments. At local level the church heals relationships, and at national and international levels addresses systemic injustice. At international level broken relationships and power imbalances need to be restored between the developed and developing nations. Political and economic power relationships need to be addressed to create a world of true equality and partnership between nations. The church as a channel of Gospel values can model and advocate restored and healthy relationships to bring about transformation and development.

We live out our Christian faith in the world, pursuing God's restorative purposes in all areas of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation, our call as those created in the image of God, in which we all participate in God's work of renewing and remaking. We are all offered God's grace and the opportunity to work together with God in the creation and recreation of the world.

The church is a faithful presence bearing witness to and to be an embodiment of the coming Kingdom of God. Such faithfulness works itself out in the context of complex social, political, economic and cultural forces. As Christians we live and act prophetically; being first and foremost faithful rather than successful; confident in God's power to overcome and with our hope in Christ (Ephesians 3:14-21, Ephesians 1:20, Philippians 1:6).

Christians are aliens in the world (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11), but nevertheless our purpose in the world is to declare the one who has brought us out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9). We are 'yeast' not something new breaking into the world from the outside, but the bursting out of the new, new possibilities and new values in human lives, within the old order. Christians may be involved in world-building but we are not building the Kingdom of God on earth, but rather we are living as Kingdom people in an alien kingdom. The establishment of the Kingdom is an act of God's sovereignty and will find its consummation at the end of time.

As we acknowledge the rule of God in all aspects of our lives, our life in this world proclaims the *shalom* to come a foretaste of the coming kingdom. Elaine Graham and Stephen Lowe (*What Makes a Good City? Public Theology and the Urban Church*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2009) challenge the church in the UK to address questions of citizenship and regeneration, culture and globalization, poverty and justice within an increasingly urban society. They identify the powerful influence and opportunities of faithful capital - the long-term presence of people and networks of faith in our most deprived urban areas. Not only are faith communities in our cities physically present, they are actively, dutifully and, sometimes passionately, engaged in caring and campaigning for those who need care most - sometimes people whom wider 'society' has forgotten. We have a philosophy of life, faith or worldview which, includes a commitment to something beyond serving our individual needs.

Seeking to change a world of poverty and inequality: James 2:14-26

The work of God's Spirit is transformation, and the mission of the Church is to bring about transformation. Poverty is rooted in broken relationships and the church's role is one of reconciliation to restore broken relationships (2 Cor. 5:17-20), which leads to human flourishing.

Social change begins with personal change, but wider structural change only comes about when people come together and work for justice - to uphold the rights of others and ensure that people's needs and entitlements are met. The church's contribution is to build

communities, committed to Christ through worship, prayer and service of the poor, who will bring about transformation. Poverty is rooted in broken relationships and the church's role is one of reconciliation to restore broken relationships (2 Cor. 5:17-20), which leads to human flourishing. If we follow Tom Wright's challenge to live as Christ has already returned, we will reject any indifference to suffering and the repeated tendency by some to emphasise the heavenly joy at the end of time leading us to ignore present injustices resulting from other factors, such as colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization.

When the Church demonstrates the presence of the Kingdom it will seek to act as a vehicle of freedom and justice for those enslaved. The presence of Christ through the activity of the Spirit will transform the lifestyles of Christians and guide them to live sacrificial cross-shaped lives, which look to the needs of others. We live as those who know that the current reality of the world challenges the God-given responsibility to neighbours both local and global. We seek to identify the issues which are of relevance to people in their lives and seek with others in community to address the problems in practical ways.

We can find inspiration in the work of Tearfund and Christian Aid who seek transformation locally and globally by envisioning churches, developing communities, changing the policies and programmes of businesses and governments, and responding to natural disasters.