

Caring for the soil is part of our relationship with our father. It requires work and effort on our part, but when we put in this work the goodness of creation can produce the harvest we aim for.

*"He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgement."* (Proverbs 12:11)

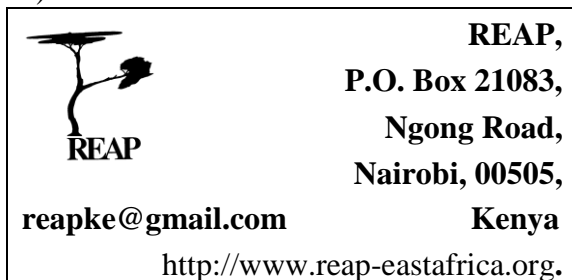
*"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody."* (I Thessalonians 4:11-12)

Caring for the soil also takes into account other people round about us. When we do not care for our soil, our neighbours also suffer. When we care for it our neighbours benefit.

*"Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour's life. I am the Lord .... love your neighbour as yourself."* (Leviticus 19:16 & 18)

*"Do not plot harm against your neighbour, who lives trustfully near you."* (Proverbs 3:29)

*"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* (Philippians 2:4)



## **CARING FOR THE SOIL: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE**

God created the world, and everything in it:

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ... God called the dry ground "land" ... And God saw that it was good. Then God said "let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds. And it was so."* (Genesis 1:1, 10-11)

The Bible also tells us that God owns all that he has made.

*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it; for He founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."* (Psalm 24:1-2)

*"To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it."* (Deuteronomy 10:14)

*"The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants."* (Leviticus 25:23)

*"For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land."* (Psalm 95:3-5)

This includes all the land that we say we own, and the soil on that land is given us to use.

We are only God's Stewards. We are not only to make use of the soil God has given us but we also need to take care of our father's property.

***"The LORD God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15)***

The Bible tells us that when God created the world he was pleased with it.

***"God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)***

The soil that God gave us is very wonderfully made. God in his wisdom made it with the right structure and full of living things to keep it good, so that it will produce well:

***"By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding He set the heavens in place; by His knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew." (Proverbs 3:19)***

If we care for the soil, the way that God made it will ensure that it goes on producing well for our benefit:

***"You show your care for the land by sending rain; you make it rich and fertile. You fill the streams with water; you provide the earth with crops. This is how you do it: you send abundant rain on the ploughed fields and soak them with water; you soften the soil with showers and cause the young plants to grow. What a rich harvest your goodness provides! Wherever you go there is plenty." (Psalm 65:9-11 GNB)***

If however we ignore the way that God has created the soil, and we only seek to use it and not care for it we can expect problems. The story of creation teaches us that we need to get a balance between making use of and caring for what God has given us in creation, including trees. We need to work with rather than against creation. This is a challenge we need to work through.

***"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray towards this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land that you gave your people for an inheritance." (II Chronicles 6:26-27)***

***"If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land." (Leviticus 26:3-5)***

We are not glorifying God our father if we let the soil that he has given us in stewardship be washed away in the heavy rains and let erosion go unchecked.