We are all aware of the saying, "Community is the key to success." As encouraging as this project sounds, "Community is the context for the growth of convictions and character." If this is true, then we need to help create simple, community-driven environments, where convictions and character can be reclaimed.

When I visited one of the new wells in Rwanda, I noticed hundreds of people walking for up to 3 miles with these unforgettable yellow jugs. Every day, a person from every family will walk or ride a bike to the well to get water for the day. Through clean water locations, healing to individuals is happening daily. Conviction and character is being restored. Bill McKibben, in his brilliant book Deep Economy, thinks growth in developing countries, "should concentrate on creating and sustaining strong communities, not creating a culture of economic individualism." Clean water not only benefits individual Rwandans but also offers a deep place for developing the Rwandan community.

**Influence is gained by doing something.** The most difficult element of moving an idea into motion is starting. Yet, when a great idea is launched, influence quickly follows. The dream that woke me up that night was about one little boy, yet thousands of people have joined in the initiative and thousands of Rwandans have benefited from one boy. Rwanda Clean Water has gained attention from media, churches, and cultural leaders because we did something.

Everyone has an idea, but few people move that idea into reality. When creators move from idea to action, people will follow. Don’t search for influence. Don’t care who gets the credit. Search yourself. Find what moves you. Discover a place of need. Authentically pursue a vision that helps humanity. Use the gifts you have been given. Influence will follow at the moment you can handle it. Join Rwanda Clean Water Project. As encouraging as this project has been to me, most people in rural Rwanda still do not have access to clean water. Women and young children walk for miles to fetch water from swamps and dirty rivers, and bucket and canisters. It is amazing that with a simple gift of water we can literally save lives, decrease illnesses, and create sustainable communities.

We are looking for 300 churches to join a growing community in raising funds to bring clean water to Rwanda. Give $3,000 to Rwanda Clean Water and 750 people will receive the simple gift of drinking clean water for the rest of their life. Your community, your family, your neighborhood, and your friends can work together to raise the funds that will forever change lives. Please join us in providing clean water to Rwanda.

**Clean water creates sustainable communities.** We are all aware of the genocide that resulted in millions of deaths in Rwanda. Thirteen years later, they are restoring friendships, through conversations and grace. Steven Garber in his book Fabrice of Fazishafenue says, “Community is the context for the growth of convictions and character.” If this is true, then we need to help create simple, community-driven environments, where convictions and character can be reclaimed.

Clean water and clean water projects are not the only way to help the needy. Other projects include drilling wells, conserving water resources, and treating sewage. All of these projects are not rocket science. For trivial proportion of Western government budgets, areas, and treating sewage do not involve rocket science. On one hand, the task is straightforward. Drilling wells, conserving water resources, and treating sewage do not involve rocket science. On the other hand, the task is straightforward. Drilling wells, conserving water resources, and treating sewage do not involve rocket science. But there’s a tension that suffuses all relief and development work to provide water to very needy people. On the one hand, the task is straightforward. Drilling wells, protecting water sources, conserving water resources, and treating sewage do not involve rocket science.

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Virtues: Stewardship requires godly character, moral excellence

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dominion is further prescribed in Genesis 2:15 as “keeping” or “serv-ing” the creation. In return, God has equipped His creation to “serve” humankind with the fruits of their labor. Here, the Scripture supports an ethic based upon duty or moral responsibility as the proper motivation for serving God and caring for creation.

This duty ethic is evident in the challenge of Joel Hunter, pastor of Northland Church in Orlando, Florida, who, when asked for his position on global warming, is quoted as saying, “...we need to do this regardless of what the science of it is. We need to take care of the earth and do what we can to stop the pollution and accumulation of gases, because it’s just the right thing to do.”

If obedience to the biblical command to care for creation brings growth in Christian character and godliness, how are these virtues nurtured?

The biblical environmental stewardship ethic recognizes the importance of scientific data in making personal lifestyle and institutional decisions. But, it also calls Christians to do more than simply fashion lifestyle and institutional decisions motivated by the Christian character. The resultant impoverishment of soul leads to further material and social excesses that destroy relationships, families, and even local churches. Instead of being free to worship God and to find joy in His power and in the material bounty of His creation, their actions further degrade the creation as they attempt to meet spiritual and emotional needs in wrong ways.

Now, consider three cases in which Christian character is enriched through proper stewardship of creation motivated by the Christian virtues. When a person pursues the spiritual disciplines noted above, she is nourished by the Word of God while the Spirit nurtures the virtues of love, joy, kindness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Her disposition that finds fulfillment in her Creator and His creation enables her to avoid material excesses that result in discontent and broken relationships.

Instead of degrading the creation, she utilizes God’s provision of the material world with moderation. Her decision to conserve energy and reduce carbon emissions by car pooling or public transportation is neither a joyless duty nor a distraction from “spiritual priorities.” Instead, she is able to conserve God’s creation while, at the same time, building human relationships in which she practices the virtues of faith, love, and kindness.

A second example emphasizes the spiritual discipline of regular worship within the body of Christ. It is God’s design that the local church be a place of worship, mutual encouragement, and accountability to nurture the convictions and virtues that grow out of our personal walk with Him. Here, we worship corporately, encourage one another in Christ, and become equipped as a winsome counterculture in a society overcome by materialism, discontent, and broken relationships.

Both Ed Brown’s book cited earlier and Matthew Sleeth’s Serve God, Save the Planet (Chelsea Green, 2006) contain many ideas and examples of how churches and individuals can implement creation care as an integral part of their mission.

Finally, when a person practices the spiritual disciplines and regularly worships and fellowships in a local church, he can be spiritually prepared for the vocation to which God has called him as an “ambassador for Christ” (II Cor. 5:20). He gains a small glimpse of God’s great desire to see wholeness, relationship, and beauty restored to both in lost sinners and within God’s creation. He willingly considers positive changes in his lifestyle and in support of world missions because he begins to see God’s vision of justice and mercy for the poor and disenfran-chised of Earth who cannot compete economically for the energy and resources we consume. He also develops a willingness to learn about climate change and other environmental issues from the scientific experts and to respect differences of opinion among those dedicated to understanding how the creation works.

When an environmental ethic based upon fear of consequences is enhanced by one based upon duty and moral virtue, both the people of God and the creation can flourish. Obedience to Scripture sets us free to adopt a lifestyle based upon love and devotion to our Creator, and free to manage material resources, time, and spiritual gifts for the benefit of our neighbor and his neighborhood. The result can be a spiritual “climate change” that motivates others to make a gentler impact on the creation while taking time to enjoy what God has made and be thankful.

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Further Reading


This accessible, informative, and wide-ranging introduction to creation care includes a discussion of the importance of stewardship as part of the Christian character. Highly recommended.


Other resources:
- John Silvis