

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BIBLICAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

SEVEN KEYS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

BIBLICAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: SEVEN KEYS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014

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This thesis project examines Christian environmentalism and espouses the need for the principles of environmental stewardship to be fanned into flame among Christians through the ministry and influence of Christian leaders. It has become apparent that America and the rest of the world face an environmental crisis as is reflected by climate change, high air and water pollution, land and habitat degradation, depletion of forests and issues of waste management. However, this reality has not been matched by a corresponding level of practical action and activism to protect and restore the environment in Christian circles. This thesis project will provide a framework for Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards active biblical environmentalism that reveals obedience to God and addresses current environmental threats.

Abstract length: 127 words.

DEDICATION

This thesis project is dedicated to my husband, John Moyanah and my children, Michael and Jonathan. I would not have made it without your prayers, patience and encouragement. I love you and thank God for you! To my mum, Constance Muwadzuri, thank you for teaching me the way of the Lord from a young age! May our dear God and Father bless you!

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I would also like to extend my gratitude to all those Christian leaders in the Southwest region of the United States, who participated in the surveys. Thank you for your honest answers that helped me in the writing of this thesis.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge my husband John Moyanah, for the support, constructive criticism, patience and encouragement as I worked on this thesis project. Without you, it would have been so hard to complete this thesis project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

D. Min	Doctorate of Ministry
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NASB	New American Standard Bible

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the rise in the number of environmental problems that the world faces today, there is no doubt that there is a need for the principles of environmental stewardship to be fanned into flame among Christians through the ministry and influence of Christian leaders. Christian leaders have been placed by God in strategic positions of leadership and influence in their various ministries, and they can use this to move people towards God's environmental agenda by their teachings, motivation and exemplary actions. It is, therefore, imperative that key guidelines be provided for Christian leaders to help them to fulfill this God-given mandate. Literature review and anonymous surveys of Christian leaders in the Southwest region of the United States (Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico) informed the key recommendations of this thesis project.

Statement of the Problem

The apparent environmental crisis that the world faces makes it imperative that something be done and Christians have to be a part of this process. According to the Barna Group, sixty percent of American adults believe in the necessity of environmental protection and fifty seven percent realize the threat that global warming poses.¹ However, despite this truth, there is still reluctance by many Christians to act in practical environmental protection. It is this reluctance to act that is worrying because everyone has to play a part in addressing the environmental harm that threatens the world today.

Many Christian leaders know that they have a biblical stewardship responsibility towards the environment and see the need for action to address environmental degradation, but do not

¹ Barna Group, "Americans Describe Their Moral and Social Concerns, Including Abortion and Homosexuality" (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, January 21, 2008), <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/13-culture/50-americans-describe-their-moral-and-social-concerns-including-abortion-and-homosexuality> (accessed June 2, 2013).

know the extent to which they should be involved in environmentalism. This has resulted in inaction on the part of leaders who most of the time do not even teach or preach about Bible based environmental protection. Their failure to lead in this regard has also led to a corresponding lack of action by Christians; who generally have not engaged in practical Bible based stewardship of the environment.

The lack of action revealed above, creates a problem for Christianity as it is now seen as choosy with regards to which biblical standards it upholds and which standards it ignores. Environmental stewardship has been one of those standards that are often ignored and it is this author's contention that Christians have to understand and practice biblical environmental protection or stewardship as it is part of God's biblical mandate. As Christians uphold all of God's standards (including environmental stewardship), glory will be given to God and Christianity will not be looked at as hypocrisy. It is against this background that this thesis project examines Christian environmentalism, especially the evangelical principles of environmental stewardship, with the aim of finding a way for these principles to be fanned into flame among Christians through the ministry and influence of Christian leaders. It is the hope of this author that this thesis project will provide seven key recommendations that will help Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards true biblical environmentalism, which will help resolve the environmental problems and threats that our world faces today in a way that is consistent with the Scriptures.

Entire works have been written on environmental protection and biblical environmental stewardship. There have also been many works on leadership and, in particular, Christian leadership. However, not much has been written on how the concepts of Christian leadership and biblical environmental stewardship can be combined to produce a framework that will guide

Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards active biblical environmentalism that glories God and at the same time addresses current environmental threats. It is critical for Christians to understand their role in biblical environmental stewardship. However, if Christian leaders do not play their part, it is doubted that much can be done to raise awareness and action with regard to true biblical environmental stewardship. It is for this reason that this work was undertaken to provide insight into the role that Christian leadership can play in biblical environmental stewardship.

It is true that every society is different and care has to be taken not to propose a one size fits all kind of strategy. However, the strategic position of Christian leaders in the biblical environmental agenda is beyond question because God has given them a platform through which they can teach and demonstrate this biblical agenda to their audiences, who in most cases view them as servants and mouthpieces of God. It is Gary Yuhl's opinion that leadership is defined based on "...individual traits, behavior, influence over people, interaction patterns, role relationships, occupation of an administrative position, and perception by others regarding legitimacy of influence..."² This legitimacy of influence and administrative influence noted by Yuhl is missing when Christian leaders do not take their place. It is, therefore, this author's belief that Christian leadership is the critical missing piece that makes it almost impossible for Christians to be zealous about biblical environmental protection. That is why this study questioned one hundred Christian leaders about what they think their role should be with regard to biblical environmental protection and the implications of such leadership in addressing the environmental harms this world faces. It is clear that if Christian leaders do not play their part, nothing will be done. It is time for Christian leaders to take their place and lead people towards God's environmental agenda.

² Gary Yuhl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 3rd Edition, (Englewood Heights: Prentice Hall, 1994), 2.

Definition of Terms

There are many words in the English language that have been defined differently depending on the bias of the one defining. For this reason, there are several key terms used throughout this thesis project that will require specific definition to ensure understanding. The words: Christian leader, environment, environmentalist, Christian environmentalism, steward and biblical environmental stewardship will be defined to ensure that they will be understood in the manner this writer intends.

A Christian leader in this study, is anyone who leads or heads a ministry, church or group of people/followers for the purposes of Christian ministry regardless of the title (Pastor, Minister, Reverend, Bishop, Evangelist, Apostle, Missionary, Teacher, Bible Study Teacher and so on). Any leader of a Christian church or ministry is considered a Christian leader regardless of their denomination.

The word, environment, for the purposes of this study, refers to the natural world, as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity.³ An environmentalist is to be understood as a person who is concerned with or advocates for the protection of the environment.⁴ From the definition of environmentalist above, Christian environmentalism is defined for the purposes of this thesis project, as a concern for or activism in the protection of the environment based on what the Bible states and relationship with Jesus. This interest in the environment derives from the person's service to and worship of God, who created and cares about the natural environment.

³ *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, accessed at: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/steward?q=stewardship#steward> 23, (accessed September 11, 2013).

⁴ *Ibid.*

The word, steward, refers to a person employed to manage another's property or a person whose responsibility it is to take care of something.⁵ Finally, from the context of the definition of steward above, biblical environmental stewardship, for the purposes of this thesis project, refers to the Christian responsibility to take care of the environment, which is God's property.

Statement of Limitations

While care was taken to ensure the reliability of the research results, there were limitations with regards to this thesis project. Firstly, this research is not an exhaustive source on the topic of biblical environmental stewardship nor is it a deep study of Christian leadership. However, it combines the concepts of Christian leadership and biblical environmental stewardship to produce a framework that will guide Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards active biblical environmentalism. This thesis project is, therefore, limited to just the role of Christian leadership in the biblical environmental stewardship agenda. The concepts of Christian leadership and biblical environmental stewardship will only be analyzed to the extent that they help to develop a framework through which Christian leaders can influence and motivate their congregants and members to be engaged in biblical environmental stewardship and address current environmental threats in a manner that is consistent with the Scriptures.

Secondly, there are limitations with regard to the data from the surveys. Only one hundred Christian leaders in the Southwest region of the United States (Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico) were anonymously surveyed and the results of these surveys informed the framework of action that this thesis recommends. This sample might not be

⁵ *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, accessed at: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/steward?q=stewardship#steward> 23, (accessed September 11, 2013).

representative of the views of every Christian leader in every part of the United States, although it was considered adequate for the purposes of this research. It was beyond the scope of this research to survey every Christian leader in every part of the United States. However, all the recommendations made by this thesis are based on biblical teachings and standards.

Finally, the seven key recommendations for Christian leaders outlined by this thesis project are designed for use as guidance for Christian leaders' leadership in biblical environmentalism. Christian leaders will need to use their discretion in how they will apply these recommendations in their current ministry settings.

Statement of Methodology

The research was in three parts, which are, primary and secondary data collection, and data analysis. The first part was the secondary data collection, which was a review of literature to provide the background data, give insight into key theories and inform the methodology. For the purposes of this research, secondary documentary sources such as books, articles, journals and web references were used.

The second part was the primary data collection, which included an anonymous survey investigation of one hundred Christian leaders in the Southwest region of the United States to bring to light the gaps in Christian leadership as it relates to Christian environmental stewardship and inform the framework of action that will be recommended.

A twenty-five question survey was developed for primary data collection and was mailed, emailed and given in person to one hundred Christian leaders in the Southwest region of the United States (Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico). The survey focused on leadership gaps, role definition in the biblical environmentalism agenda, the biblical environmental agenda itself and areas needing action. The survey results informed the recommendations in this thesis.

Christian leaders were chosen as the group to be surveyed because they possess vast knowledge about what the Bible teaches on leadership and Christian environmental stewardship and were considered to be best placed to provide deeper insight into the issues that hinder their leadership in this area and provide direction in terms of recommendations for action and perspectives about the reasons for current trends. These are issues that are not adequately covered by literature. It was the intention of this research to learn from the Christian leaders what they think they can do to lead the way towards biblical environmental protection through their ministry and influence. It is the hope of this researcher that, through this study, key recommendations can be developed for Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards active biblical environmental protection that addresses current environmental threats in a way that is consistent with the Bible.

Data analysis was the third aspect of this research. The data collected from literature research (secondary data) and surveys (primary data) was analyzed and used to guide the writing and recommendations of this thesis. The seven key recommendations for Christian leaders recommended by this thesis project were a result of data collection and analysis, which were both part of the research methodology.

Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to outline the literature used in this thesis project research. It will focus on the literature relevant to biblical environmental protection and Christian leadership as well as works that deal with the interface between the two.

Literature On The Biblical Environmental Protection Mandate

Dr. Norman Geisler is a renowned scholar and educator who has taught college or

university students at graduate level for over 50 years serving as a professor.⁶ Norman Geisler's book, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options, 2nd Edition*, which was first published in 1989, evaluates contemporary ethical options. The second edition of his book, which was used for this thesis, was published in 2010 with updated chapters. The chapter on ecology was the most helpful for this thesis as Geisler outlined, explained and distinguished the three major ecological views namely the materialist view, the pantheist view and the Christian view.⁷ He echoes the merits of the Christian view against the materialist's wastage of nature and the pantheist's worship of it. He emphasizes that while, it is true that Christianity is the mother of modern science and that modern technology has emerged from it, it is man's failure to live according to the Bible that has led to the ecological crisis.⁸ He also emphasizes that true biblical understanding and responsibility calls for true stewardship not exploitation, pollution and destruction. Dan Story wrote the book, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*, published in 2012. In this book, he answers pressing questions about the Christian's responsibility towards the environment; providing insight into what the Bible says about the environment and man's stewardship of creation. He develops a Bible-based theology of nature that provides clear guidance on what God's will is concerning the environment.⁹ He also espouses, in detail, the role the church has in environmental ethics.¹⁰

John C. Bergstrom's article, *Principles of a Christian Environmental Ethic: With Applications to Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment*, provides deep insight into

⁶ <http://www.normgeisler.com/> (accessed 10/12/13).

⁷ Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book Group. Kindle Edition, 2010).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?* Kindle Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012).

¹⁰ Ibid.

biblical environmentalism. It is Bergstrom's view that, biblical environmental stewardship is to be understood based on three principles namely the Principle of Creation Value, the Principle of Sustained Order and Purpose and, the Principle of Universal Corruption and Redemption.¹¹ To Bergstrom, these three principles form the foundation of a Christian environmental ethic. His exposition of God's stewardship agenda based on the above principles was very helpful in highlighting true biblical environmentalism and understanding creation redemption as part of the full picture of God's redemptive work.¹²

D. C. Jones' article, "Theology of Nature," published in the second edition of the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*,¹³ provides an all round summary of the theology of nature. Jones emphasizes the fact that God created nature, maintains it and reveals himself through it.¹⁴ While God is above nature, He delights in it and intends for mankind to be His stewards over nature. Jones is of the opinion that Jesus became incarnate so that He could redeem the whole creation, and that includes mankind and nature.¹⁵

D.J. Hall's book, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*¹⁶, details mankind's stewardship responsibility as creatures made in the image of God. It is Hall's view that though mankind was exiled from the garden they are still called to dominion as stewards who do not

¹¹ John C. Bergstrom, "Principles of a Christian Environmental Ethic: With Applications to Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment," <http://www.leaderu.com/science/bergstrom-enviroethics.html> (accessed August 9, 2013).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," in Walter A. Elwell (eds.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd Ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 817.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

¹⁶ D.J. Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

disregard nature.¹⁷ This still holds true even though life may be harsher after the fall. This book was resourceful on the matter of environmental stewardship.

In *Ecologies of Grace*,¹⁸ Willis Jenkins identifies the problem Christianity faces in trying to define, contextualize and solve the ecological problem. He presents three major strategies that Christians have relied on to understand environmental problems. These strategies are eco-justice, stewardship, and ecological spirituality that draw on sanctification, redemption, and deification, respectively. By doing this, Jenkins helps provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between Christianity and ecology, thus preparing a way for theological renewal.

In, *While Creation Waits: A Christian Response to the Environmental Challenge*¹⁹, Dale and Sandy Larsen addresses the issue of how people can protect/respect their environment without worshipping it. The authors provide great insight into the history of the environmental movement as well as direction on how to exercise true Christian stewardship and responsibility without falling into the same category as earth worshippers.

The book, *Environmental Ethics: Intercultural perspectives*,²⁰ is a collection of nine essays that dig deep into the bases for environmentalism. These essays show how different traditions and religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Daoism and even western tradition, all present a moral obligation to take care of the environment. The Christian based essays were the most resourceful for the purposes of this thesis to bring out the Christian moral responsibility to the environment.

¹⁷ D.J. Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

¹⁸ Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁹ Dale and Sandy Larsen, *While Creation Waits: A Christian Response to the Environmental Challenge*, (Harold Shaw Publishers: Wheaton, Illinois, 1992).

²⁰ King-Tak Ip(ed.), *Environmental Ethics: Intercultural perspectives*, (Rodopi, 2009).

David Gill, in *Doing Right: Practicing Ethical Principles*,²¹ provides guidance into deciding what is right or wrong; while balancing competing priorities and values. Gill presents the Ten Commandments as ethical principles that help Christians as they strive towards loving God and others. According to Gill, the first commandment establishes the mission by placing God on the throne and once God's position is solid and unrivaled, then his agenda will follow, leading to commitment to larger missional ends (like being responsible in caring for the environment). In emphasizing the Gospel of Light, Gill notes ten arenas in which to act and, environmental management is named as one of these ten.

The book, *Between Heaven and Earth: Christian Perspectives on Environmental Protection*²², by Fred Van Dyke provides the background of how prior to the 1990s, Judeo-Christian tradition was repeatedly named as the cause of the environmental crisis.²³ However, remarkable transformation took place in the 1990s that allowed people to re-examine what the Scriptures say about environmental protection.²⁴ In Fred Van Dyke's opinion, as with other pressing modern issues, a church that ignores the environment is considered irrelevant as people need to be encouraged to care for the environment for the same reason they care for their own bodies, which is for God's glory.²⁵

The Bible contains a lot of verses that point to mankind's mandate to be God's stewards over nature. These Bible verses were very instrumental in this thesis project. Genesis 1 details

²¹ David Gill, *Doing Right: Practicing Ethical Principles*, (Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2004).

²² Fred Van Dyke, *Between Heaven and Earth: Christian Perspectives on Environmental Protection*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, Santa Barbara, California, 2010).

²³ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

²⁴ Fred Van Dyke, *Between Heaven and Earth: Christian Perspectives on Environmental Protection*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, Santa Barbara, California, 2010), 16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the steps in creation and shows how God created nature and mankind. This establishes God as the Creator of all and reflects how God delights in the creation he deems “very good.”²⁶ Genesis 1:27-29 is particularly important because it states how God created mankind in His image and gave them dominion over the earth, which implies a use and stewardship responsibility. This scripture also shows that human beings have an elevated position over nature as creatures made in the image of God.

The Psalmist in Psalm 147 expresses how God maintains and sustains nature. He does this by covering the heavens with clouds, providing rain for the earth, making grass to grow on the mountains, giving food to the beasts and ravens as well as making snow, frost, wind and ice. Psalm 147 was used to prove God’s love and sustenance of nature. Hebrews 1:3 and Psalm 104:24-32 also support the same principle that God maintains and sustains nature. Even Luke 12-24 and 27-28 point to the fact that God takes care of the ravens, the lilies and the grass.

Colossians 1:17 teaches that in Christ, all things hold together. This means that every created thing, living and non-living is held together in Christ. Based on this, it would be true to say that Christ cares for nature and holds it together.

Another Scripture that reflects the importance of nature is Romans 1:20. This verse states that God’s power, presence and glory are revealed in nature. Therefore, even though God is above nature as its Creator, His attributes are revealed in it.

In addition to the above, in the Old Testament, God instructed His people not to destroy trees in battle,²⁷ to use sanitary waste disposal techniques,²⁸ to allow land to lie fallow for some

²⁶ Genesis 1:31(NASB).

²⁷ Deuteronomy 20:19 (NASB).

²⁸ Deuteronomy 23:12-13(NASB).

time,²⁹ and increase productivity of fruit trees by not eating from them for some time.³⁰ These Scriptures reveal God's environmental laws and point to the fact that nature is important to God. God cares about nature enough that He does not allow it to be carelessly destroyed or mishandled.

Isaiah 24:4-6 speaks about mankind's destruction of nature. It says:

The earth mourns *and* withers, the world fades *and* withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.³¹

The above Scripture was used to show that it is man's disobedience that has led to the environmental degradation that the earth endures.

There are also inferences of the earth's redemption in the Bible. Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 as well as 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 21:1 speak of the fact that the earth shall be renewed in the same way that mankind will. References to the "new earth" in these Scriptures speak of the redemption and the eschatological renewal of nature through Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:19-23 states:

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

The above passage of Scripture reveals that even creation is awaiting its redemption and renewal. It appears that the redemption of nature is dependent on the redemption and renewal of

²⁹ Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 25:2-4 (NASB).

³⁰ Leviticus 19:23-25(NASB).

³¹ Isaiah 24:4-6(NASB).

mankind. This is inferred from the fact that creation is noted as awaiting in eager anticipation the manifestation of the sons of God so that it can be set free from its slavery into the glory of the children of God. The fall of mankind in Genesis 3 affected both mankind and nature and both are awaiting final redemption and renewal in Christ Jesus.

In Genesis 2:15, God placed Adam in the garden to work it and take care of it. This is reflective of the fact that from the beginning God intended for human beings to take care of nature even as they benefit from it. Again in Genesis 2:19, Adam was given the stewardship responsibility of naming of the animals. In this thesis project, this Scripture is understood to mean that God wanted Adam and all mankind to take responsibility for the animals.

In addition to the above, Luke 12:42 provides an example of a good steward who was faithful and wise as he was put in charge. This verse in Scripture will be used as a model for good environmental stewardship in this thesis project. Another biblical model of stewardship is Matthew 25:14-30, which is the parable of the talents. Again, the parable will be used as a model of good environmental stewardship that shows that good stewards will be rewarded as bad stewards are punished.

In Luke 12:15, Jesus warned that people should be on their guard against all kinds of greed because a man's life does not consist only in the abundance of possessions. This scripture will be used as a basis to ward off the arguments of those who just care about riches; whose greed has caused them to disregard nature.

Revelation 11:18 is an eye-opening Scripture that speaks of the fact that those who destroy the earth will be punished. This is a consequence of bad environmental stewardship that many people do not want to acknowledge. It points to the fact that mankind ought to protect the earth as God considers it important or else risk punishment for not doing so.

Literature On Christian Leadership

Henry and Richard Blackaby, in their book, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On To God's Agenda*,³² provide leaders with practical, biblical direction on how to make a positive impact on the organizations and people they lead. The authors point to God himself developing and empowering leaders in line with His purpose and they contend that spiritual leadership is about moving people onto God's agenda.

In her book, *The Pastor as Moral Guide: Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling*,³³ Rebekah Miles espouses how pastors, as guiding leaders, shape the moral direction of their congregants. This book is a very useful resource on how leaders can develop their skills to enable them to provide solid moral guidance in ethical/ moral issues.

John C. Maxwell's book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*³⁴, first published in 1998 and then revised in 2007, is one of the best books on leadership. It provides a list of the important leadership principles that Maxwell has learnt over many years as a leadership expert and author of over 70 books mainly on leadership³⁵. Some of the irrefutable laws include the Law Of the Lid, the Law of Influence, the Law of Process, the Law of Magnetism, the Law of Sacrifice, the Law of Connection, the Law of Buy-in, the Law of Priorities, the Law of Explosive Growth and the Law of Legacy.

³² Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People onto God's Agenda*, (Nashville, TN. Broadman Holman. 2002).

³³ Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis MN, 1999.

³⁴ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007).

³⁵ <http://www.johnmaxwell.com/about/meet-john/> (accessed August 16, 2013).

Elmer Towns provides eight laws of leadership that prepare the leader of today to effectively lead.³⁶ Towns is of the opinion that a true leader is able to influence, relate to other people and persuade others to follow.³⁷ He makes a critical contrast between older Pastors who were leaders of people and today's leaders who are leaders of leaders.³⁸ This new leader of leaders is not a dictator but one who shares his leadership with his people through shared decision-making, shared problem-solving and shared goal setting,³⁹ which enable him to influence more effectively.

Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are, by Neil Cole shows that growing disciples can emerge naturally as leaders right where they are. He not only show the inadequacies of the current focus on the church as opposed to kingdom and the authoritarian structures that have become commonplace in the church, but also proposes strategies/recipes for homegrown leadership that is able to naturally carry God's vision forward.

Ken Boa in *The Perfect Leader: Practicing the Leadership Traits of God*,⁴⁰ states that leadership begins with God himself as the ultimate model of leadership. This is based on the premise that, God has demonstrated principles for leadership revealed in the Bible that can be very useful for today's leaders whatever their organizational or ministry settings may be. To be a good leader one has to develop a heart for effective leadership and this begins by developing a heart for God, whose character, nature, integrity and example of leadership presents the best

³⁶ Elmer Towns, *The Eight Laws of Leadership: Making Extraordinary Leaders Out Of Ordinary Believers*, (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1992).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁰ Ken Boa, *The Perfect Leader: Practicing the Leadership Traits of God* (Kindle Edition), Eugene, OR :Wipf & Stock Pub, 2012).

standard of leadership there could ever be.⁴¹ Boa also presents the skills that leaders need namely vision casting, innovation, team building and problem solving. He goes on to explain the Perfect leader's relationships, which are upheld by communication, encouragement, exhortation, practical relationship building and servant leadership.

*Lead Like Jesus: Leadership Development For Every day of the Year,*⁴² by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, is written from an understanding of leadership as an influencing “process that reaches beyond the hierarchical and formal positions organizations into life-role relationships.⁴³ The purpose of this book is to, inspire and equip leaders to live out of the love-based leadership Jesus calls each of His leaders to model in their daily walk.⁴⁴

*Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Personal Vision,*⁴⁵ by Andy Stanley provides a clear understanding of what vision is and provides a blueprint for developing personal vision. In this book vision is defined as being formed in the hearts of those who are no longer satisfied with the status quo. It creates a sense of wanting something to be done and it catapults people to action. Vision requires courage and confidence. It requires launching out as if you were absolutely assured of the outcome. Stanley emphasizes that visionaries must be influencers if they are going to see their visions through from start to finish. They must be able to move people from where they are to where they believe they could and should be. Stanley analyzes the life of Nehemiah as well as his vision of rebuilding the ruined

⁴¹ Ken Boa ,*The Perfect Leader: Practicing the Leadership Traits of God*.

⁴² Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Leadership Development For Every day of the Year*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Personal Vision*, Random House Digital, Inc., 2005.

walls of Jerusalem. He then draws important concepts from the story of Nehemiah that he uses to guide understanding and realization of the vision that God has for each person.

The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Responsibility,⁴⁶ by George Barna shows the effectiveness that lay-team leadership can bring into church ministry. Barna notes that team leadership is advantageous in that the results almost always transcend what any individual could have produced without the help of the other leaders in the team. In team building, Barna notes three traits of members of an effective team; these are people who have been called by God to lead, who have godly character, and who possess the competencies to help people fulfill God's vision for the group. These qualities ensure that all team members bring something to the table that is of benefit to the kingdom of God.

Leighton Ford's book, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values, & Empowering Change*,⁴⁷ presents Jesus as the model for transforming leadership. In Ford's opinion, transforming leaders are those who are able to invest their power into their followers to empower them so that the leader is reproduced in others.⁴⁸ Ford uses the roles Jesus took on in His transforming leadership to model a basis for today's leaders to be able to create, articulate and communicate a compelling vision; change what people talk about and dream of; make followers transcend self-interest; enable others to see the world in a new way; provide prophetic insight into the very heart of things; and bring about the highest order of change.⁴⁹ This

⁴⁶ George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Responsibility (Barna Reports)*, Colorado Springs, Colorado: WaterBrook Press, 2001.

⁴⁷ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values, & Empowering Change*(Kindle Edition), (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values, & Empowering Change*(Kindle Edition), (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 72-77, Kindle.

is what Jesus did and this is what today's leaders have to do.

Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People,⁵⁰ by George Barna(ed.) is a collection of articles on leadership by renowned leaders such as Jack Hayford, Elmer Towns, Leighton Ford, C. Peter Wagner, Tom Phillips, to mention a few. The leadership lessons in this book come from vast experience and expertise on leadership and were useful for the purposes of this thesis project.

The Bible provides vast guidance on the issue of Christian leadership, which was very helpful in guiding the Christian leader's mandate as proposed in this thesis project. The first Scripture is Proverbs 11:14, which states that, "Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory."⁵¹ This Scripture points to the importance of leadership as leaders provide wisdom and wise counsel. The above scripture elevates leadership to an extent that without it, people are sure to fall and where good leadership is, victory and success are to be expected.

In Acts 20:28, Christian leaders are exhorted to lead Christ's church and guard it with the knowledge and understanding that Christ purchased it with His own blood. Clearly leaders are to exercise due diligence in their leadership and shepherding; teaching their flock all things and leading by example in all things that the Bible mandates.

In addition to the above, 1 Peter 5:2-4 states that Christian leaders should shepherd the flock of God according to His will as well as lead by example. This passage of Scripture was used as the basis for this thesis project's belief that leaders have a role to play, in word and deed, in leading God's people towards good environmental stewardship, which is the will of God

⁵⁰ George Barna (ed.), *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People* (The Leading Edge Series), (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1997).

⁵¹ Proverbs 11:14 (NASB).

mandated in the Bible. This Scripture notes that there is an unfading crown of glory to be received by such good leaders when Jesus returns.

Ephesians 4:11-15 mandates Christian leaders to prepare, guide and lead God' people towards works of Christian service. In Ephesians 4:11-15, the Bible states that:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Based on the above passage of Scripture, all Christian leaders have to equip God's people for works of service. This includes service to God in relationship with the environment as He mandates in His Word.

Like Ephesians 4:11-15 above, Matthew 24:45-47 speaks of the responsibility of the sensible Christian leader to manage other servants and feeding them. There is a reward for those who will be faithful in this charge when the Master returns.

Galatians 6:9 speaks to the discouragement that is often faced by those who lead in good things. It encourages leaders not to lose heart or grow weary in well doing because in due time they will reap.⁵² It is also an exhortation to remain courageous even in tough times.

Luke 12:48b brings the understanding that Christ is greater than the leaders He appoints. Therefore, leaders have to always lead with the understanding that they are submitted to the will of God and to the mission Christ gives to them in relation to Him, others and to nature. Finally, Luke 12:48 states that, much is required from those whom God has given much. Leaders have received much from God and God expects them to do much to ensure that His will is done on

⁵² Galatians 6:9(NASB).

earth in relation to environmental protection. God has also given Christian leaders much responsibility and so a large burden lies on them to ensure that what God expects of them is accomplished for His glory

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The Environmental Crisis is Real

One of the important reasons for this thesis project is the apparent environmental crisis that America and the rest of the world face. The Barna group's research has revealed that many Americans believe in the necessity of environmental protection and realize the threat that global warming poses.¹ It is, therefore, difficult to deny the negative environmental impact humanity has had on the environment as is reflected by climate change, high air and water pollution, land and habitat degradation, depletion of forests, issues of waste management from America's industries,² to mention a few. Most of this damage to the environment is being done for economic gain as people, businesses and nations choose economic gain over care for the natural environment. This is in spite of the fact that human beings depend on nature for their livelihood in terms of food, water, oxygen and clean air, vegetation and other environmental benefits.

The 2005 OECD Environmental Performance Review for the United States³ noted that the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of water resources, biodiversity at risk, air pollution as well habitat loss and degradation in the United States needed to be improved.⁴ It was particularly noted that among the species of plants and animals listed as threatened or

¹Barna Group, "Americans Describe Their Moral and Social Concerns, Including Abortion and Homosexuality" (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, January 21, 2008), <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/13-culture/50-americans-describe-their-moral-and-social-concerns-including-abortion-and-homosexuality> (accessed June 2, 2013).

² Cunningham, M. A., & Cunningham, W. P., Principles of Environmental Science, Inquiry & Application, 5th Edition, Boston, MA : McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc, 2009, 309-317.

³ OECD, OECD Environmental Performance Reviews – USA, OECD publishing, 2005, http://books.google.com/books?id=o0IVezNku-UC&pg=PA76&dq=the+environment+in+the+USA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=vtNJUru4CqrD2AXm_4G4Ag&ved=0CEIQ6AEwBDgK#v=onepage&q=the%20environment%20in%20the%20USA&f=false (accessed October 1, 2013).

⁴ Ibid.

endangered, eighty five percent were listed as such because of loss and degradation of their habitats.⁵ Unless concern for nature becomes a priority, things will continue to deteriorate. As if the above were not enough, Shah also notes that “The climate is changing. The earth is warming up, and there is ‘now overwhelming scientific consensus that it is happening, and human-induced. With global warming on the increase and species and their habitats on the decrease, chances for ecosystems to adapt naturally are diminishing.’”⁶ Shah’s observation above reveals that global warming and other environmental harms that are occurring are now beyond nature’s ability to adapt by itself. This means that mankind has to make deliberate effort to protect the environment and help it heal. Cunningham also notes that the United States cuts an average of 2 million trees everyday to produce newsprint and paper products⁷ and this has placed an unbearable burden on its forests. This calls for protective action that will ensure that the loss and deterioration in every aspect of the environment does not continue. A protective conservation stance has to also be taken based on the fact that the environmental crisis has no borders as most environmental harms have the ability to cross borders in their effects and some natural resources are shared with other countries.⁸

From the above, it is clear that the environmental crisis this world faces is real and nothing short of positive environmental protection action will help the situation. Even Christians, who have been lagging behind in environmentalism, have to be involved. Christian leaders,

⁵ OECD, OECD Environmental Performance Reviews – USA, OECD publishing, 2005, http://books.google.com/books?id=o0lVezNku-UC&pg=PA76&dq=the+environment+in+the+USA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=vtNJUru4CqrD2AXm_4G4Ag&ved=0CEIQ6AEwBDgK#v=onepage&q=the%20environment%20in%20the%20USA&f=false (accessed October 1, 2013).

⁶ A. Shah, “Climate Change and Global Warming Introduction,” 2010, <http://www.globalissues.org/issue/178/climate-change-and-global-warming> (accessed May 19, 2010).

⁷ Cunningham, M. A., & Cunningham, W. P., *Principles of Environmental Science, Inquiry & Application*, 5th Edition, Boston, MA : McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc, 2009, 309-317.

⁸ Ferrante, J, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, 7th Edition, Belmont, CA : Thomson Wadsworth, 2008, 480.

therefore, have to take their place to ensure that Christians understand their biblical environmental mandate and begin to take positive action. Only then will positive change take place as all stakeholders become involved in environmental stewardship.

Anti-Christian Views Do Not Measure Up

While it is acknowledged that human beings cannot avoid relating to and interacting with the environment, many views have been proposed with regard to this relationship. There are three main views about the environment which have determined how people have dealt with nature. These views are the Materialist View, the Pantheist View and the Christian View.⁹ Although the Christian view is the basis for this thesis project, it is important to understand the other two views and why they fall short.

The philosophical basis of a materialist view of the environment grows out of an atheistic or secular humanist worldview.¹⁰ This means that there is no acknowledgement of God or His biblical ethical values. The materialist view sees the environment as a limitless source of energy, which over time has produced humans who, by virtue of their higher evolutionary status, are in charge of the world around them.¹¹ In fact, they blame misdistribution of resources as the root problem of the earth's problems to include damage to the environment. Materialists believe that by technology, global education and redistribution of resources, humans can change their environment in ways desirable for their own ends.¹² Because of the materialist conception that nature's resources are unlimited and their view of humankind as the ultimate authority in

⁹ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 315-25, Kindle.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 315.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹² *Ibid.*, 316-17.

resource use¹³, materialists are not interested in conservation efforts and stewardship over the environment.

Although the materialists believe the above, an evaluation of the materialist view reveals certain inadequacies that make their theoretical stance baseless. Firstly, the world is not eternal. Even the Bible states that heaven and earth will pass away.¹⁴ Secondly, energy is not unlimited as revealed by the fact that the amount of usable energy in the universe is decreasing as the world is running out of usable energy.¹⁵ Thirdly, technology cannot solve all problems.¹⁶ No wonder that David Ehrenfeld says, “Deep within ourselves we know that our omnipotence is a sham, our knowledge and control of the future is weak and limited, our inventions and discoveries work, if they work at all, in ways that we do not expect, our planning is meaningless, our systems are running amok—in short, that the humanistic assumptions upon which our societies are grounded lack validity.”¹⁷ Ehrenfeld’s words reveal that though mankind may think that they have it all in technology and technological innovation, there is only One who is omnipotent and that is God. Everything else that mankind can try is limited and inadequate to solve all of humanity’s problems. Technology has not solved all the poverty, sickness, sinfulness and environmental degradation in this world. Clearly, technology is not the solution to all problems. The forth reason why materialism does not measure up in explaining mankind’s relationship with nature is that misdistribution is not the root problem as the materialists have tried to purport. The truth is that it is the sinfulness of mankind that is responsible for the environmental degradation

¹³ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 328, Kindle.

¹⁴ Luke 21:33(NASB).

¹⁵ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 317, Kindle.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 317-18, Kindle.

¹⁷ David Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 58.

that is apparent today. Even the Bible acknowledged that when it says, “The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.”¹⁸ This passage of Scripture acknowledges that the earth is polluted by its inhabitants who have violated God’s precepts. That is why environmental degradation is taking place and the world is fading and withering. It is not misdistribution that has caused the harm that is seen but it is man’s sinfulness and inability to obey God. Lastly, the materialist view that education is the solution is faulty as it disregards mankind’s need for a Savior, who redeems them and renews their hearts¹⁹ and minds,²⁰ enabling them to live in obedience to God. Clearly, education is not the means to salvation, either morally or ecologically.²¹ The above evaluation shows that the materialist view is inadequate in explaining the true nature of the relationship that is to exist between mankind and nature. Therefore, Christian leaders cannot use it as a basis to lead God’s people towards His environmental agenda.

The Pantheist view is one of the environmental ideologies that have been used to define man’s relationship to the environment. The pantheistic approach is anti-materialist and anti-Christian. This means that they do not believe that nature is limitless like the materialists and therefore, do seek the protection of nature. However, their views are not Christian nor do they derive from obedience to God’s Word. In fact, Pantheists believe that nature, itself, is divine and

¹⁸ Isaiah 24: 4-6(NASB).

¹⁹ Titus 3:5(NASB).

²⁰ Romans 12:2(NASB).

²¹ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 318, Kindle.

mankind has to revere it and protect it against the intrusion of technology.²² They also believe that nature is a living organism and a manifestation of God.²³ In addition to the above, pantheists are proponents of the view that humans are one with nature and are not kings over nature but servants of it.²⁴

An evaluation of the Pantheist view of nature reveals that nature is not divine. In fact, nature is part of creation; created by the Almighty God.²⁵ Because nature is created, it is clear that nature is not equal to its Creator who is divine, holy and higher than nature as the transcendent God. That is why nature cannot be worshipped as only God is to be worshipped.

Another aspect of the pantheist view that disqualifies it is its belief that nature is alive. Geisler notes that nature is not alive, but contains a multiplicity of living organisms as well as non-living matter.²⁶ Furthermore, the pantheist view falls short when it is revealed that that species are not manifestations of God, though God's invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature are seen and understood through what He created as revealed by Romans 1:20. This is because nature is not divine as noted earlier. Lastly, humans are not one with nature nor are they servants of it. The fact that humans are not merely servants who are subservient to nature is revealed in Genesis 1:28, which speaks of the fact that mankind has been elevated over nature as creatures created in the image of God. However, even kings can be servants,²⁷ and Jesus was the perfect example of this as revealed in the fact that He was the King who was the

²² Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 319, Kindle.

²³ *Ibid.*, 320.

²⁴ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 320, Kindle.

²⁵ Genesis 1: 1-25(NASB).

²⁶ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 321, Kindle.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 322.

suffering servant. Jesus taught His disciples that He did not come to be served but to serve.²⁸ Again the Bible states that Jesus emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant.²⁹ Therefore, while mankind is not subservient to nature, he can serve nature like Christ came to save and serve man though He is man's King.

From the above, it is clear that both the materialist view and the pantheist views fall short. They are extremes that Christian leaders have to be careful of as they lead people towards true God ordained environmentalism. A look at the true biblical mandate as portrayed by the Christian view of the environment will help Christian leaders as they lead in biblical environmentalism.

The Biblical Mandate to Protect the Environment

This thesis project is based on the theological understanding that biblical environmental stewardship is part of God's agenda on earth. God gave mankind a mandate to take care the environment while they use it for their sustenance. Although, the Christian church has been reluctant to engage in environmental protection, this mandate is clearly taught in the Scriptures. This Christian ethical responsibility to the environment is the Christian view of the environment, which is distinct from the materialist view and the pantheist view, whose weaknesses were outlined above. Norman Geisler points out that the Christian view of the environment is the only one that proposes the proper respect for and use of natural resources in stark contrast to the materialist's wastage of nature and the pantheist's worship of it.³⁰ Geisler's observation is right in that the Christian view is based on God's Word, which is true. This view derives from an understanding that God is the Creator of everything and has commanded human beings to be His

²⁸ Mark 10:45(NASB).

²⁹ Phil. 2:5-8 (NASB).

³⁰ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 315, Kindle.

stewards over nature. Therefore, mankind has a divinely appointed obligation to be good stewards of what God has given to them.

In understanding the Christian view of the environment and the biblical stewardship mandate that flows from it, it is important to understand that any biblical environmental stewardship agenda is to be understood based on three principles namely the principle of creation value, the principle of sustained order and purpose and, the principle of universal corruption and redemption.³¹ To Bergstrom, these three principles form the foundation of a Christian environmental ethic. The principle of creation value acknowledges that God is the creator of nature and He values it. The principle of sustained order and purpose acknowledges that God sustains nature and has a purpose for it. Finally, the principle of universal corruption and redemption speaks of how mankind and nature were corrupted as a result of the fall and how God's ultimate plan in redemption is the redemption of both mankind and nature. The biblical environmental protection mandate outlined below will touch on the issues around these principles and what the Bible says about it. However, even within the framework of the principles defined by Bergstrom, there is still some disagreement within the Christian camp on how eco-theology is to be defined and understood.

Laurel Kearns is noted by Walter Jenkins as having observed three broadly defined models of Christian eco-theology: eco-justice, environmental stewardship and creation spirituality.³² These three types of Christian environmentalisms appeal to different

³¹ John C. Bergstrom, "Principles of a Christian Environmental Ethic: With Applications to Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment," <http://www.leaderu.com/science/bergstrom-enviroethics.html> (accessed August 9, 2013).

³² Walter Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2008, 18.

denominations and theological frameworks. Jenkins notes that eco-justice theologies rely on an understanding of sanctification in which grace illuminates creation's integrity. Stewardship theologies understand redemption as involving a person's encounter with God that creates a vocational responsibility to care for the environment.³³ Creation spirituality holds on to themes of deification, which brings all creation into the gift of union with God.³⁴ Eco-justice is in line with the Roman Catholic view of sanctification, while ecological stewardship is linked to the Protestant understanding of redemption, which follows obedient discipleship themes.³⁵ Finally, creation spirituality is often linked to the deification theories of Eastern Orthodoxy where communion with creation results in union with God.³⁶ From this, it is easier to distinguish that mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics are the ones that often make the eco-justice arguments while Evangelical Protestants stand with the stewardship view and the Eastern Orthodox Christians tend to argue for creation spirituality. While the above categorization has revealed that there is disagreement on eco-theology among Christians, this thesis will place particular emphasis on the stewardship principles outlined in evangelicalism for they capture the concept of redemption as involving a person's encounter with God, which is life changing and involving a responsibility to care for the environment. This rightly defines God's relationship with nature as revealed by the Bible as well as man's relationship with nature that derives from man's relationship with God.

³³Walter Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2008, 19.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

From the Bible it is clear that God created nature and everything that exists.³⁷ God is also documented in the Bible as the owner of the world.³⁸ Genesis 1 details the steps in creation and shows how God created nature and mankind. From the heavens and the earth, light and darkness, day and night, the waters, the dry land, the plants and vegetation, the stars, all living creatures/animals and mankind were formed by God for His purpose and pleasure.³⁹

Additionally, the Bible is clear that God Transcends Creation and is unlike it and above and beyond it.⁴⁰ In fact He is not to be identified with or equated to nature or any part of it. The Bible also teaches that God is immanent throughout His Creation and this is revealed in the fact that He is omnipresent and nature expresses his presence.⁴¹ The apostle Paul states that God's invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature are seen and understood through what He created.⁴² This means that while God is separate from nature, His power and divine nature are revealed in it and Isaiah 6:5 states that the whole earth is full of His glory. Therefore, no one can say that God has not revealed Himself because He has revealed His attributes and power in nature.

In addition to the above, the Bible teaches that God maintains and sustains nature⁴³ and that in Christ all things hold together.⁴⁴ The Psalmist expresses it so well when he states that:

³⁷ Genesis 1:1(NASB).

³⁸ Psalm 24:1(NASB).

³⁹ Genesis1:27(NASB).

⁴⁰ Genesis 1; Acts 17:24-26(NASB).

⁴¹ Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20(NASB).

⁴² Romans 1:20(NASB).

⁴³ Hebrews 1:3; Psalm 104: 24,27,30(NASB).

⁴⁴ Colossians 1:17(NASB).

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
 Sing praises to our God on the lyre,
 Who covers the heavens with clouds,
 Who provides rain for the earth,
 Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.
 He gives to the beast its food,
 And to the young ravens which cry.⁴⁵

The above expression by the psalmist is an indication of how God maintains nature. The psalmist goes on to state how God gives snow like wool, scatters the frost like ashes, casts forth ice as fragments, knows how to melt them and causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.⁴⁶ Elsewhere in the Bible we are told that it is God who enables springs to pour water into the ravines,⁴⁷ animals get life and food from Him,⁴⁸ he directs the rain and thunderstorm,⁴⁹ makes the sun shine by day and the moon and stars at night,⁵⁰ makes the sea waves roar,⁵¹ puts in place the seasons of the year,⁵² schedules harvest time⁵³ and, makes flowers beautiful.⁵⁴ Jesus reinforces this by stating that the Father cares for the birds⁵⁵ and clothes the lilies of the field.⁵⁶ This is not a picture of a God who does not care about nature as some have tried to argue. In fact,

⁴⁵ Psalm 147: 7-9(NASB).

⁴⁶ Psalm 147: 16-18(NASB).

⁴⁷ Psalm 14: 10(NASB).

⁴⁸ Psalm 104: 27; Job 38:41; Joel 2:22(NASB).

⁴⁹ Job 38:25(NASB).

⁵⁰ Jeremiah 31:35(NASB).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Genesis 8:22(NASB).

⁵³ Jeremiah 5:24(NASB).

⁵⁴ Matthew 6:29–30(NASB).

⁵⁵ Luke 12:6.

⁵⁶ Matthew 6:26, 28(NASB).

it is very clear that, even though God is above nature, He loves it, created it, and maintains it and His power, power and attributes are revealed in it.

God's delight in nature is also revealed in the fact that six times⁵⁷ in creation week, God acknowledged that in His eyes His creation was good and when all was put together, he said it was "very good." It is Jones' view that inherent in this affirmation is the divine pleasure and satisfaction in the natural world that He created.⁵⁸ It is, therefore, apparent that God truly appreciates nature and was pleased with what He had created. Furthermore, the fact that so many times the Bible makes symbolic references to nature to bring out spiritual truth is reflective of God's appreciation of nature. For instance, in John 15: 1, Jesus speaks of Himself as the true vine and Psalm 1 likens a blessed man to a tree planted by the streams of water, which bears fruit in its season and its leaves do not wither. Jones is of the opinion that this does not mean that nature is valued only as a vehicle for "spiritual truth, but the symbolism reflects God's prior appreciation of the value of nature in its own right as an important work of God's hands.⁵⁹ Jones goes on to explain God's love for nature by stating that:

...he (God) is no remote 'clock winder,' as in the mechanistic world posited by deism. He is the living God (Acts 14:15) who gives life to everything (Nehemiah 9:6). The 'possessor' (creator-owner) of heaven and earth is no absentee landlord; He is the 'faithful Creator' (1 Peter 4:19) who keeps His covenant with the day and with the night, so that they come at their appointed time (Jeremiah 33:20).⁶⁰

This supports the fact noted earlier that God cares for nature and maintains it as a very present and faithful Landlord as opposed to an absentee one. He faithfully does all He needs to do to

⁵⁷ Genesis 1: 10,12,18,21, 25, 31(NASB).

⁵⁸ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 817.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 817.

ensure that creation functions as He created it to function and is not a remote ‘clock winder’ in line with the Deist view of God.

Despite God’s original intention noted above, the fall of man as depicted in Genesis 3 resulted in a curse for both mankind and nature. Genesis 3:17-19 brings to light the fact that both man and nature were cursed after the fall. However, in spite of that, the world is still under covenant with God⁶¹ and it is a covenant that God renewed and continues to keep since the time of Noah⁶² That is why the laws of nature continue to hold even after his judgment of human sin because God renewed His covenant with nature after the flood. It is clear, therefore, that even after the fall; God has kept His covenant with nature and promised never again curse the ground on account of man and never again to destroy every living thing but to maintain the laws of seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.⁶³This brings understanding of the fact that God is still in covenant with nature to continue to sustain it. This was reiterated in Genesis 9:8-17 when a rainbow was manifested in the sky as a sign of this covenant never to destroy nature on account of man’s sins. Even though sin entered into the world and nature endures some harm from man’s activities, God is in an everlasting covenant with nature never to destroy it with a flood again.

Though God is in covenant with nature as revealed above, humankind’s sin and disobedience to God has continued to result in environmental deterioration.⁶⁴ Isaiah 24:4-6 states that the earth is withered and it mourns because it has been polluted by its inhabitants who have transgressed God’s law, broken the covenant and violated statutes. This shows that it is man’s

⁶¹ Jeremiah 33:25(NASB).

⁶² Genesis 8:22; 9:16(NASB).

⁶³ Genesis 8:21- 22(NASB).

⁶⁴ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*.

sinfulness and inability to obey God that has led to degradation of the earth.⁶⁵ In Romans 8:18-25, the bible speaks of the fact that creation was temporarily subjected to frustration because of human sin with the hope of eventual release from that bondage. This frustration has resulted in the environmental degradation and deterioration affecting the earth today. Jones states that the groaning of creation noted in Romans 8:

...are labor pains of a rebirth of freedom in which the divine purpose for the earth will be brought to fruition. Thus, the creation now waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed, for it will share in that glorious liberation at the second coming of Christ when believers will experience the redemption of the body in the resurrection and enter full possession of the rights and privileges of their adoption.⁶⁶

It is clear from this that nature suffers because of human sin⁶⁷ and there appears to be enmity between people and nature.⁶⁸ Exploitative behavior is apparent in the relationship between humans and nature and nature is depicted in Romans 8 as crying out for the divine purpose of God for it to take place here on earth. These are calls for redemption and at the second coming of Christ; nature will share in the glorious liberation as a new earth is created. It is no wonder that the Psalmist expects singing mountains and applauding rivers at the second coming of Christ as judge.⁶⁹ The result will be the creation of a new heaven and new earth, which will be the home of righteousness⁷⁰ and the eternal abode of redeemed humanity.⁷¹ This shows that God loves nature and will redeem and renew it together with mankind.

⁶⁵ Isaiah 24: 4-6(NASB).

⁶⁶ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 818.

⁶⁷ Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:19-22(NASB).

⁶⁸ Genesis 3:18-19(NASB).

⁶⁹ Psalm 98:8(NASB).

⁷⁰ 2 Peter 3:13(NASB).

⁷¹ A.A. Hoekema, "New Earth" in *Bible and the Future*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1979).

From the above, it is without doubt that it is incumbent upon Christians to inclusive in their redemption theology(to include the redemption of nature) if they are to be consistent with the biblical view of nature. Christians need to recognize that Jesus redeems both people and nature and that nature's redemption is bound to mankind's redemption .⁷² If such recognition and acceptance takes place, the exploitative behavior is suppressed as stewardship responsibility is applied.⁷³ However, if Christians ignore the biblical teachings on nature's redemption and are only concerned with human redemption, then exploitive behavior will remain and stewardship responsibility will be rejected. The Bible speaks of new bodies⁷⁴ and the new earth⁷⁵ referring to the redemption and renewal (in the end) of both mankind and the earth. Fred Van Dyke recognized a very important aspect of the environmental debate by stating that although mankind waits for resurrected bodies they do not ignore their present ones and for the same reason, mankind has to care for this earth as they await a new earth.⁷⁶

Jesus Himself is revealed in the Bible as having a relationship with nature. The Bible states that He is the agent and heir of creation⁷⁷ as well as the firstborn of creation by whom and for whom all things were created.⁷⁸ The Bible also says that Jesus sustains all things by his

⁷² Romans 8:18-25.

⁷³ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*

⁷⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:23-24; Colossians 3:10-11(NASB).

⁷⁵ Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1(NASB).

⁷⁶Fred VanDyke(et. al), *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

⁷⁷ Hebrews 1:2(NASB).

⁷⁸ Colossians 1:16(NASB).

powerful word⁷⁹ and showed Himself to be ruler over nature by commanding the wind and waves to be still.⁸⁰ Perhaps the most important aspect of the relationship between Jesus and nature is His redemptive role as He became incarnate to fulfill God's purpose for all of creation (mankind and nature) as noted earlier. He is the one who will restore and reconcile all things in the eschatological age⁸¹

Given God's concern for nature as reflected above, it is important to go deeper and understand how mankind fits into the picture. As noted earlier, both man and nature are created beings. This means that human beings have a "kinship" with other created beings because they depend on God just as nature for sustenance. Among created things, there is a symbiotic relationship that allows for inter-dependence among created beings. Humans depend on the environment for their sustenance (food, drink, clean air). Therefore, humans have to avoid corrupting, polluting or over-exploiting the environment because this would be a sin against themselves and God, who made them stewards of the earth.⁸² Nature on the other hand, is under the guardianship of mankind, who is God's steward over nature.

While such a kinship relationship exist between, the Bible also states that human beings were exalted by God above other creation.⁸³ In fact the psalmist explains it clearly by stating:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than God,

⁷⁹ Hebrews 1:3(NASB).

⁸⁰ Mark 4:39(NASB).

⁸¹ Acts 3:21, Col. 1:20(NASB).

⁸² Geisler, *Christian Ethics*.

⁸³ Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 6:26; 10:31; 12:11-12(NASB).

And You crown him with glory and majesty!
 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
 You have put all things under his feet,
 All sheep and oxen,
 And also the beasts of the field,
 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
 Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.⁸⁴

The above psalm provides a clear indication that though human beings are fellow creatures with nature, they are the crown of creation, having been created in the image of God.⁸⁵ This dual position of man in relation to nature is clearly portrayed by D. C. Jones when he says that as biophysical beings, humans are part of the natural world that is their environment but as the image of God, they are personally related to the Creator and with that comes a responsibility to Him to rule the earth justly for His glory.⁸⁶ It is clear from the above that while human beings are part of nature, they are above nature. This means that humankind is not merely a peasant in creation as the pantheists believe. He is a king over nature but a king who serves like Jesus.⁸⁷ Dan Story shows his understanding of this relationship by noting that mankind's elevated position comes with a stewardship responsibility to be God's care takers over nature, which God values independent of (though not equal to or above) people.⁸⁸ Therefore mankind, as God's ordained stewards over the environment, are to have the same loving concern for nature that God has with the understanding that of all creation, only human beings possess the God-like attributes to care for nature, protect it, maintain it, nurture it, save it from destructive exploitation and

⁸⁴ Psalm 8:3-8(NASB).

⁸⁵ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

⁸⁶Ibid., 817.

⁸⁷ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*.

⁸⁸ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*,1105-1106, Kindle.

abuse.⁸⁹ This points to the fact that, God permitted the human race to use nature for its own purposes, but with the understanding that nature belongs to Him and people are His caretakers. This is God's original and eternal intention with regard to the relationship between mankind and nature. Even the Bible states that God put Adam in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.⁹⁰ Again in Genesis 2:19, Adam was given the stewardship responsibility of naming of the animals showing that God wanted Adam and all mankind to take responsibility for them. This was the intention of God despite that some have used Genesis 1:27-29 to disprove this.

A look at Genesis 1: 27-29 will help put everything into its rightful context. Genesis 1:27-29 speaks of the fact that God created mankind in His image and gave them dominion over the earth and authority to subdue it. The use of the words "subdue" and "dominion" found in Genesis 1:28 above have been misinterpreted to imply absolute authority that could result in abuse and destruction of nature at will. The concepts of subjugation and dominion over nature, are believed to have given rise to wholesale exploitation and pollution of it.⁹¹ However, it is only man's failure to live according to the Bible that has led to the ecological crisis.⁹² It is important to understand that the words "subdue" and "dominion" in Genesis 1:28 refer to a stewardship or caretaker role that God has given to mankind over nature as only God has absolute authority over nature.⁹³ It is also important to understand that it is not the Christian worldview that encourages the abuse of nature. In fact, it is the materialist view that does this because materialists view

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1105-1106, Kindle.

⁹⁰ Genesis 2:15(NASB).

⁹¹ Geisler, 327, Kindle.

⁹² Ibid., 328.

⁹³ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists*.

nature's resources as unlimited and humankind as the ultimate authority in their use.⁹⁴

In line with the Christian view of nature, God has instructed the family of man to be his care-takers over creation, exercising a stewardship relationship with nature in the same way as the good steward in Luke 12:42, who was faithful and wise as he was put in charge. Another biblical model of stewardship is in Matthew 25:14-30, which is the parable of the talents. In this parable, the faithful servants were rewarded for good stewardship while the bad steward was punished. Even in the Old Testament, a mandate is placed on humanity to take care of the owner's property. A good Old Testament example is when Adam was placed in the garden to work it and take care of it knowing that it belonged to God. In Genesis 6:19, Noah was commanded by God to preserve two of every kind of living creature, male and female, so that the animals would not be completely destroyed during the flood. Furthermore, God's environmental laws in the Old Testament reflected the stewardship responsibility. For example there was a law that encouraged Sabbath rest for humans, beasts, and the land one year out of seven.⁹⁵ There was also the law of jubilee that stated that every fifty years the land would return to its original owners⁹⁶ and the law against over-harvesting,⁹⁷ which ensured good nutrition for the poor and the soil from the remains. Furthermore, there were laws of sanitation that were linked to God's holiness⁹⁸ and laws against land greed, as it is God who owns the land, not humans.⁹⁹ God also

⁹⁴ Geisler, 328, Kindle.

⁹⁵ Exodus 23:10-11(NASB).

⁹⁶ Leviticus 25:23 and 28(NASB).

⁹⁷ Leviticus 19:9(NASB).

⁹⁸ Leviticus 13-14; Deut. 23:13(NASB).

⁹⁹ Psalm 50:12; Job 41:11; Psalm 24:1; Psalm 24:1; Psalm 5:8(NASB).

instructed His people not to destroy trees in battle,¹⁰⁰ and to help increase the productivity of fruit trees by not eating from them for some time.¹⁰¹ These environmental moral laws show how God required human beings to exercise good environmental stewardship in their dealings with nature.

It is important to note that Old Testament moral law is the foundation on which New Testament Ethics rests.¹⁰² Generally, the moral principles referenced in the New Testament are confirmations and restatements of ethical teachings in the Old Testament.¹⁰³ Jewish Law in the Old Testament can be categorized into three groups, namely ceremonial laws(that included the sacrificial system and various religious festivals), civil laws(which ensured law and order, justice and fair punishment in Jewish society) and then moral laws(which included the ten commandments¹⁰⁴ and the environmental laws).¹⁰⁵ Jewish ceremonial and civil laws are no longer applicable today because Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death met the full requirements of the Old Testament Law,¹⁰⁶ ushering in the church age and a new covenant relationship with God.¹⁰⁷ Because of this, nowhere in the New Testament are Jewish ceremonial Laws and Civil laws restated or taught. Only the moral laws are restated and applied throughout the New Testament with Jesus and the apostles teaching them as they taught against murder, adultery,

¹⁰⁰ Deuteronomy 20:19(NASB).

¹⁰¹ Leviticus 19:23-25(NASB).

¹⁰² Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Exodus 20:1-17(NASB).

¹⁰⁵ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*

¹⁰⁶ Matt 5:17(NASB).

¹⁰⁷ Hebrews 8:7; 9:15; Luke 22:20(NASB).

stealing, lying and homosexuality as part of the New testament ethics . This means that even God's directive to mankind to be His stewards over nature is still applicable today as it was part of God's moral law.

The law of good stewardship is based on the understanding that God is the creator and owner of all things and has entrusted the earth and its resources to mankind's care. Mankind must, therefore, act responsibly because the Scriptures say that it is required of stewards that they are found trustworthy.¹⁰⁸ Human beings have to be trustworthy stewards of God's earth and not waste and destroy the earth's resources for they belong to God, who gave the original environmental protection mandate in the perfect garden, which was to be worked, cared for and used according to God's orders. Though mankind was exiled from the garden they are still called to dominion as stewards who do not disregard nature¹⁰⁹ even though life may be harsher after the fall. This is because the Bible warns of the Apocalypse stating the time will come for judging and destroying those who destroy the earth.¹¹⁰ If humankind does not keep, preserve and nurture the earth as mandated by God, they shall be found guilty for destroying the earth and be liable for God's judgment. Therefore humanity has to make an effort to take care and protect the earth and develop a deep understanding of the fact that the entire human race is a recipient of the stewardship mandate, which comes with accountability.¹¹¹ Humanity will be rewarded for good stewardship and punished for bad stewardship of God's earth.

While all the above Scriptures point to the fact that nature has to be respected and cared

¹⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 4:2(NASB).

¹⁰⁹ D.J. Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

¹¹⁰ Revelation 11:18(NASB).

¹¹¹ Dan Story, 1631, Kindle.

for as God’s creation, this does not mean that mankind has to worship nature.¹¹² A theologically sound environmental doctrine acknowledges that God alone is to be served and worshiped and care for the environment should derive from a relationship with God. Dan story puts it nicely when he states that, “Environmentalism is not a religion. Nor is the earth the center of our existence. That would smack of neo-paganism. Jesus Christ is the center of our existence and the earth and all things “live and move and have their being” in Him(Acts 17:28). Christian environmentalism is always “theocentric,” that is, we care for nature but serve and worship God.”¹¹³ This reveals that nature should not be worshiped as the Pantheists do nor should it be seen as a limitless source of energy as the atheistic/secular materialists believe. A theocentric kind of environmentalism that derives out of service and worship to God alone forms the theological basis for this thesis. Van Dyke He states that the way mankind cares for this earth says something about their character and values and he mandates the church to make caring for the environment one of its standards.¹¹⁴ This is because environmental stewardship is about obeying God and being faithful to His commission to care for the earth.¹¹⁵ This is especially true given that the current environmental crisis faced by the world today is a moral crisis that can only be tamed by a shift in moral values as informed by the Bible.¹¹⁶ It takes a moral decision to obey or disobey God. That is why it is necessary to understand that only reverence for God and

¹¹² Dale and Sandy Larsen, *While Creation Waits: A Christian Response to the Environmental Challenge*, (Harold Shaw Publishers: Wheaton, Illinois, 1992).

¹¹³ Dan Story, 2236-2239, Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Fed VanDyke (et. al), *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

¹¹⁵ Dan Story, 2096-2098, Kindle.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1927 – 1930, Kindle.

His creation should inform Christian ecological ethics.¹¹⁷ Northcott is of the opinion that the real ecological problem lies in the modern substitution of human reverence to God and divine providence with a reliance on treason and science.¹¹⁸ Such a scenario is problematic. That is why this thesis places the burden on Christian leaders to lead God's people in word and deed towards His environmental agenda as described in the Bible in reverence to Him alone.

The Christian Leader's Role

While the mandate to protect the environment has been given to all mankind, leadership is what God uses to move people onto His agenda.¹¹⁹ It is an acknowledged fact that the key for organizational success and growth is effective leadership. Leaders have the ability to teach biblical truth and move people towards the plans of God as described in the Scriptures. This ensures that God's people flourish in every way as God intended and become God stewards of all that God gave them stewardship over, to include the environment. No wonder the Bible states that "where there is no guidance the people fall, but in the abundance of counselors there is victory."¹²⁰ This shows that God placed leaders strategically to provide guidance to His people. It is clearly within God's plan for there to be leaders to help God's people to move in line with His will. God would have never called or used leaders if there was no need of them. In the Bible many notable leaders like Moses, Nehemiah, Paul and above all Jesus, were used by God to lead His people according to His plan. Even in situations where there was a need for change or the ushering in of new understanding, God appointed and anointed leaders to accomplish His

¹¹⁷ King-Tak Ip(ed), *Environmental Ethics: Intercultural Perspectives*,(New York, NY: Editions Radopi, 2009), 5.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On To God's Agenda*, (Nashville, TN. Broadman Holman. 2002).

¹²⁰ Proverbs 11:14 (NASB).

purpose in His people. A timeless example is Jesus, who ushered in the new covenant of grace that replaced the old way of doing things and fulfilling what God had intended to do to restore His creation to Himself.

Christian leaders need to lead Christ's church, which He purchased with His own blood,¹²¹ towards God's plans for them and to be good stewards of God's creation. The Bible states that leaders should lead in service to God; giving a warning specifically to leaders to be on guard for themselves and the flock to which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers and to diligently shepherd the church of God which Christ purchased with His own blood.¹²² This means that Christian leaders have to oversee and guide the church, knowing that it is so valuable to Jesus that He shed His blood for it. In addition to the above, the Bible also states that Christian leaders should "Shepherd the flock of God...exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."¹²³ Clearly Christian leaders have to make sure that they serve God and teach His will in all they do. Now that it is theologically understood that environmental protection is God's will, leaders have to make sure that action is taken to ensure that in their ministries and churches, something is being done to ensure that they are leading the way towards environmental stewardship in word and deed.

¹²¹ Acts 20:28 (NASB).

¹²² Acts 20:28 (NASB).

¹²³ 1 Peter 5:2-4 (NASB).

Ephesians 4:11-15 is perhaps the Scripture that best provides a solid theological basis for Christian leaders to prepare, guide and lead God's people towards works of Christian service. In Ephesians 4:11-15, the Bible states that:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

The above Scripture passage makes it clear that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers and all other Christian leaders regardless of the titles they use have been appointed by God to equip Christians (the saints) to serve God and understand His precepts. It appears that this leadership role is God ordained to ensure greater growth towards Christ-likeness in believers in word and deed. This is what this Scripture passage refers to as "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." If Christian leaders do not train and equip God's people to such a fullness of service, then they will be tossed to and fro and will not be able to do the things that God instructs them in His Word to do. Since biblical environmental stewardship/protection is God's agenda, then Christian leaders have a role to play in motivating and encouraging it among Christians. This thesis research was therefore carried out to develop a framework that will guide Christian leaders on what they can do to lead people towards God's environmental stewardship agenda.

The above is supported by Henry and Richard Blackaby, who point to God himself as developing and empowering leaders in line with His purpose for spiritual leadership. Henry and Richard Blackaby state that it is only when people begin to understand leadership in the light of

God's calling on their lives that they will be equipped to effectively lead.¹²⁴ This is because the possibilities are limitless when people submit themselves to God as servants.¹²⁵ This reinforces that spiritual leadership begins with God and is about moving people onto God's agenda. The authors depict people as looking for leaders who truly believe God and His Word to lead them into God's purposes God's way thus moving them onto God's agenda.¹²⁶ They point leaders to Jesus' model of leadership, which was premised on His obedience to the Father's will. It is evident, therefore, that good spiritual leaders have to be good followers and the key is to "obey and to preserve everything the Father reveals to them of His will"¹²⁷ This means that God is the leader and as He reveals His agenda, He expects leaders to adjust their lives to His will; thus renouncing their personal agendas to live in radical obedience to God.¹²⁸ Thus, as the Bible mandates environmental protection, it should be the business of Christian leaders to ensure that they lead and influence people to live in obedience to God in the way they relate to the environment. The overall purpose of the Christian leader's life has to live up to God's agenda because failure to do so will lead to frustration and futility.¹²⁹

Research has also revealed that pastors are moral leaders. This is because they guide and shape the moral stances of their congregants.¹³⁰ Christian leaders, therefore, have influence and can lead their congregants towards greater moral understanding of issues such as Christian

¹²⁴ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, xi.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ken Boa, *The Perfect Leader: Practicing the Leadership Traits of God*.

¹³⁰ Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*.

environmentalism and shape the moral direction of their congregants towards what God has desired concerning care for nature. As they use all the skills they have at hand, Christian leaders can change and influence positively the ethical and moral beliefs and actions of those that they lead. Elmer Towns notes that a true leader is able to influence, relate to other people and persuade others to follow.¹³¹ This means that leaders possess the ability to persuade others to follow exactly what the Bible teaches about Christian environmental protection because they are strategically positioned to influence and persuade. This is in line with Leonard Sweet's observation that it is not people who are right who change the world but those who can communicate their definition of right to others.¹³² Most Christian leaders are natural communicators whose charisma makes people to follow them. This means that they are naturally placed to communicate the biblical idea of what is right to others. That is why this thesis project places the burden on today's Christian leader to effectively lead in the biblical environmentalism.

Problem solving and goal setting are the other areas that leaders can be very effective in.¹³³ Based on that, it is clear that leaders are better placed to solve past problems as they relate to the way Christians have ignored or have been inactive with regard to nature. This is because problem solving is one of the things that leaders do. After problem solving, leaders will then be able to set new goals for God's people because God has also strategically positioned them as goal setters. This is supported by Ken Boa who is also of the opinion that leaders are to be involved in vision casting, innovation, team building and problem solving.¹³⁴ He also states that

¹³¹ Elmer Towns, *The Eight Laws of Leadership: Making Extraordinary Leaders Out Of Ordinary Believers*, 10.

¹³² Leonard Sweet, *Aqua Church*, (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1999), 167.

¹³³ Elmer Towns, *The Eight Laws of Leadership*.

¹³⁴ Ken Boa, *The Perfect Leader*.

as Christian leaders follow the example of God and lead with a heart for God, they will be able to lead effectively. In addition to the above, because leaders have the ability to live out of the love-based leadership Jesus calls each of His leaders to model in their daily walk,¹³⁵ they will be able to carry the environmental mandate forward.

Many Christian leaders have deep understanding of what vision¹³⁶ and strategy¹³⁷ are and how they are developed. Now that it is clear that environmental stewardship is God's mandate for His people, Christian leaders are able set this vision for their congregants and followers and like Nehemiah when he rebuilt the ruined walls of Jerusalem, they will see the realization of the vision of Christian environmental protection¹³⁸ and even develop homegrown leadership that is able to naturally carry God's vision forward.¹³⁹

Furthermore, Christian leaders are best placed to move forward the biblical environmental agenda because the people they lead understand that they have been called by God to lead, they have godly character, and possess the competencies to help even lay-team leadership fulfill God's vision for them.¹⁴⁰ Because of this, it is easy for them to invest their power into their followers to empower them so that the their burden for the theocentric environmental protection can be reproduced in others by their transformational leadership as they create, articulate and communicate a compelling vision; change what people talk about and

¹³⁵ Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Leadership Development For Every day of the Year*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

¹³⁶ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Personal Vision*, Random House Digital, Inc., 2005.

¹³⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 137–52.

¹³⁸ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering*.

¹³⁹ Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are*.

¹⁴⁰ Barna, George. *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Responsibility* (Barna Reports), Colorado Springs, Colorado: WaterBrook Press, 2001.

dream of; make followers transcend self-interest; enable others to see the world in a new way; provide prophetic insight into the very heart of things; and bring about the highest order of change like what Jesus did.¹⁴¹

There has also been an emphasis in recent years that Christian leadership has to be focused on the Great Commission and making disciples of all nations. While this is true this does not exclude environmentalism in the Christian leadership mandate. This is because environmental protection is part of God's agenda on earth and can be used as a point of contact to make people know about God. The apostle Paul, who is one of the great biblical leaders, used God's earth-keeping and management as a point of contact in spreading the Gospel when he stated, "...and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."¹⁴²In this instance, the apostle Paul was able to use earth-keeping as an evangelistic point of contact to ensure that many were brought to the life-saving knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ. Even Jesus in Luke 6:26-30 tells humanity of God's love by stating that if God could take care of the birds of the air and the flowers, then He surely would take much more for human beings who are made in His image. Therefore, the environmental agenda can be used as a point of contact for evangelism by Christian leaders and those they train and mentor for leadership.

In addition to the above, 1 Peter 5:2-4 states that Christian leaders should shepherd the flock of God according to His will as well as lead by example. This passage of Scripture was used as the basis for this thesis' belief that leaders have a role to play, in word and deed, in leading God's people towards good environmental stewardship, which is the will of God

¹⁴¹ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values, & Empowering Change*(Kindle Edition), (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991),Kindle location 72-77.

¹⁴² Acts 14:17(NASB).

mandated in the Bible. This Scripture notes that there is an unfading crown of glory to be received by such good leaders when Jesus returns. The matter of the reward for good leadership is also depicted in Matthew 24:45-47. This shows that Christ will reward good leadership and punish those who do not lead diligently and do not feed His people with the truth of His Word.

The Bible provides guidance on good leadership and provides a theological basis for the leadership responsibility argued for in this thesis. It goes on to provide encouragement for those who are discouraged. Galatians 6:9 encourages leaders not to lose heart or grow weary in well doing because in due time they will reap.¹⁴³ It is also an exhortation to remain courageous even in tough times. This is especially so in matters that relate to environmental protection because for many years the Christian community has been reluctant to engage in active environmentalism. Therefore, when Christian leaders will begin to lead in this area, there will be great opposition. Even Ken Boa acknowledges that maintaining his values can cost a leader dearly.¹⁴⁴ The Bible teaches that this should not discourage the leaders because they will reap in due season if they do not grow weary.

Luke 12:48b brings the important theological understanding that Christ is greater than the leaders He appoints. This means that leaders have to always lead based on the will of Christ who is higher than them and who will make it all work out according to the original plan. Ken Boa states that as leaders release themselves to God's purposes wholeheartedly and unreservedly, they are not sacrificing anything other than the illusion of self-sufficiency.¹⁴⁵ In fact they will be embracing something wonderful.¹⁴⁶ Clearly the wonderful will of God can only be manifested

¹⁴³ Galatians 6:9(NASB).

¹⁴⁴ Ken Boa, *The Perfect Leader*, 741-750, Kindle.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

when leaders give themselves whole-heartedly to the will and purpose of God. Therefore, leaders have to be submitted to the will of God as they lead and always seek to carry out the mission Christ gives to them in relation to Himself, others and to nature.

Finally, a high level of responsibility and tenacity in the work of the Lord is mandated by Scripture, and this also provides a biblical basis for this thesis. Though the environmental agenda may appear too big, leaders have to be vigilant in exercising due diligence as they teach and lead by example because Luke 12:48 states that much is required from those whom God has given much. Leaders have received much from God and God expects them to do much to ensure that His will is done on earth. They have been given much responsibility, so much is expected of them in leading the environmental agenda of God on earth.

CHAPTER III

SURVEY RESEARCH AND RESULTS

This chapter provides in-depth insight into the survey process and the results of the survey that was carried out. The first part of this chapter is the survey rationale. This will be followed by the survey process and an overview of the twenty-five survey questions that Christian leaders had to answer; detailing the information that each question intended to bring forth. Finally, the results of the survey will be unveiled. The answers to each of the twenty five questions will be detailed, explained, tabulated, sorted and trended for easier analysis.

Survey Rationale

This survey was undertaken to help validate the hypothesis that Christian leaders have a critical role to play in biblical environmentalism. It was also undertaken to obtain strategies on how this can be done. The underlying premise was a desire to learn from Christian leaders, themselves, what they think they can do to lead the way towards biblical environmental protection through their ministries and influence. The data collected was used to understand the current situation with regard to Christian leaders and environmentalism. It was also used to develop seven key recommendations for Christian leaders that will be articulated in Chapter V.

Survey Process

Data was collected from one hundred Christian leaders in the Southwest region of the United States (Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico). Any leader of a Christian church or ministry was considered eligible for participation in the research regardless of their denomination. A leader in this study, was understood to be anyone who leads or heads a ministry, church or group of followers for the purposes of Christian ministry regardless of the title (Pastor, Minister, Reverend, Bishop, Evangelist, Apostle, Missionary, Teacher, Bible Study

Teacher and so on). This wide understanding of what it means to be leader comes from a broad understanding that a leader is anyone who leads people towards God's agenda¹ regardless of title.

Recruitment for surveys was done through letters, emails, telephone calls and verbal requests to Christian leaders in the southwest region of the United States. Verbal requests were used for some churches and ministries that are located within the Dallas/ Fort Worth metroplex where the researcher lives. These recruitment requests solicited the help of Christian leaders in the survey. After recruitment, survey questions were sent out by mail, email or given to participants in person together with the letter of introduction and the consent form. Participants were asked to answer the survey questions on a voluntary basis and send them back to the researcher by mail, email or give them back in-person.

The letter of introduction effectively introduced this researcher to the participants and stated that the survey was being undertaken as part of this researcher's doctoral thesis at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary with the aim developing a framework for Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregations and members to be involved in biblical environmental protection. The participants were advised that the survey had twenty five simple questions, which would only take them about twenty minutes to complete. Participants were also advised not to include their names or any personal details on the surveys to ensure anonymity. They were also informed that since their responses were anonymous, there would be nothing to associate them with their answers, even in the final writing of the thesis project. Additionally, the consent form provided the contact information of this researcher in case the participants had any questions. Because the surveys was anonymous, the researcher only gave participants consent

¹ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 20.

forms for information only but did not require them to sign the forms nor did the researcher collect them from the participants. The consent form accompanied surveys sent by mail, email or given in person.

The first group of participants contacted were from this researcher's list of personal contacts, as a Minister. This contact list included telephone numbers and email addresses of forty-six Christian leaders in the southwest region of the United States. Of the forty-six who were initially contacted, forty one agreed to participate. The second group that was contacted included seventy-two Christian leaders, whose telephone numbers and addresses were obtained from Google searches for Christian churches or ministries in each of the four states in the Southwest region of the United States. Of these, only fifty-one agreed to participate with the rest either ignoring the request, emails returning as undeliverable or some out-rightly refusing to participate.

Because the target of one hundred Christian leaders had not been reached, this researcher used in-person recruiting techniques to contact the remaining fourteen leaders. Twenty Christian leaders were approached personally at their churches or ministry offices in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex and were requested to participate in the survey. Of these, fourteen participated; four out-rightly rejected the idea and two kept postponing until the researcher gave up. In all, one hundred Christian leaders participated by completing the survey. All the surveys received back either by mail, email or those received by hand were placed in a common folder and the information from the common folder was then analyzed and compiled for this study.

Overview of Survey Questions

This section provides an overview of the twenty-five questions asked in the survey. These were simple questions, which even non-academic Christian leaders could answer. The simplicity

ensured that every Christian leader could participate. Most of the questions were, however, not “yes” or “no” answers. The answers that were available were mainly extent answers, for instance “Not at all,” “Slightly,” “Somewhat,” “Very,” and “Extremely.” The intention was to measure the extent of goodness or severity of the situation at hand or the extent of the agreement or disagreement with the principle that was being inquired on. The higher the extent of the negative response, the more critical the problem or disagreement was. In the same way the higher the level of the positive response, the more favorable the situation was. For instance, if a respondent answered “extremely”, this meant that the level of positive response is at the highest level. In the case of a positive action, “very” or “excellent” would reveal an undeniable presence. A “somewhat” response, on the other hand, would reveal that the positive action is barely present. A “Not at all” response would show that the positive trend was completely missing. On some questions which had “yes” or “no” type answers, respondents had a third option to answer that they were not sure, if they could not answer either “yes” or “no.”

Questions Revealing Knowledge Gaps Among Christian Leaders

Questions 1,2,3, 4 and 7 are questions that inquired about knowledge gaps in leadership. These were asked in order to help the researcher understand whether leaders themselves understand the importance of environmental protection, its biblical basis and the need for Christians to be involved. Question 1 asked whether the respondents, who are Christian leaders believe that protecting and caring for the natural environment is important. Question 2 questioned if they believed that taking care of the environment is commanded in Scripture. Question 3 asked the Christian leaders if they believed Christians have a God given mandate to care for the environment. Question 4 inquired from the respondents if they believed that environmental stewardship is beneficial for the world. Finally, Question 7 asked if Christians had a role to play

in addressing the environmental harms, such as global warming, pollution, climate change, land degradation and water shortages, which the world faces today. The responses to the above questions were meant to indicate knowledge gaps in leadership because leaders cannot teach or lead the way in what they do not know or understand. A leader who does not know will not be able to lead and advise his or her followers or congregants because it is from the knowledge he or she has that a leader is expected to lead or guide.²

Questions Revealing Knowledge Gaps Among Christians

Question 11 is the only question that inquired about knowledge gaps among Christians as opposed to the leaders. It asks the respondents whether they think Christians know enough about what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship. This question was meant to bring understanding to the researcher of whether the environmental inaction among Christians could be a result of their lack of knowledge about what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship. This is especially important given that environmental stewardship is a biblical mandate as proved earlier.

Teaching/Preaching Gap Questions

Questions 5, 6 and 12 were designed to figure out if the lack of preaching or teaching about biblical environmental protection and stewardship could be the reason for lack of action among Christians in environmentalism. These questions were designed to make it possible to filter out the reasons for the knowledge and action gaps among Christians. Answers to these questions would make it possible to understand if the lack of knowledge and activism in Christian environmentalism among Christians is because they are not being taught or preached to by their leaders about it. This derives from the understanding of the biblical teaching that people

² Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, 4.

cannot know if no one teaches or preaches to them.³

Question 5 asks if biblical environmental stewardship and protection are preached and taught at the respondent's church or ministry. Question 6 asks how often the respondents (who are Christian leaders) preach or offer Bible study lessons about biblical environmental protection and stewardship at their church/ministry per year. Finally, question 12 questions the respondents if they think Pastors and Christian leaders are talking enough with their congregants and audiences about environmental protection and stewardship. Clearly these questions go to the root of the knowledge and action gaps of Christians to see if this could be a result of the fact that Christian leaders do not teach enough about Christian environmentalism.

Questions Revealing Action Gaps

Question 15 was designed to reveal action gaps. The rationale for asking this question was to determine if Christian leaders had taken any notable action to lead the way in biblical environmental protection. Question 15 questions Christian leaders if they believe they have engaged in the national environmental debate enough. Engaging in national forums that deal with environmentalism would reveal that Christian leaders are taking action in the mainstream to ensure that the environment is being protected. The responses to this question were intended to shed light onto the extent of such action based on the biblical understanding that faith without works is dead.⁴

Questions Distinguishing The Christian Environmental Mandate

Question 8, 9 and 10 are critical questions for this thesis project as they seek to distinguish the Christian mandate in the face of secular movements. Geysler notes three main views on mankind's relationship with nature, and these are the materialist, pantheist and

³ Romans 10:14(NASB).

⁴ James 2:26(NASB).

Christian views.⁵ The Christian view is based on what the Bible says about nature and it is important that Christian leaders know what the Bible says and how it is different from the views of secular movements. Therefore, the rationale for asking these questions is to determine if Christian leaders know that what the secular movements might be teaching is not always the same as what the Bible teaches.

Question 8 inquires from the respondents if there is a difference between what the Bible teaches about caring for the environment and what secular environmental movements have been teaching. Question 9 questions if respondents believe that Christian leaders have a duty to teach the truth about what the Bible says about caring for the environment. Finally, question 10 asks the respondents if they believe that Christian leaders should leave it up to secular groups to lead the way in environmental protection. Answers to these questions were intended to help the researcher understand the status quo and then frame key recommendations that ensure that what Christian leaders know and teach is not diluted by the views of secular movements.

Questions On The Theocentricity Of Biblical Environmentalism

Questions 20, 21 and 24 inquired about the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism. Question 20 asks the respondents if, in their opinion and understanding of the Bible, good environmental protection and stewardship amount to obedience to God. Question 21 asks the respondents if it is important for Christians to be good and faithful servants of God by exercising good environmental stewardship. Question 24 inquires from Christian leaders if they believe that God will be glorified as Christians all over the world engage in biblical environmentalism as mandated by the Scriptures.

The above questions derive from the understanding that Christians love nature because God created it, loves it and has given them a mandate to take care of nature, which He will

⁵ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 315, Kindle.

finally redeem.⁶ The responses to these questions were supposed to bring clarity on whether or not Christian leaders understand that taking care of the environment amounts to good stewardship and obedience to God, who gets the glory when everything He created and loves operates according to His plan.⁷

Questions On Christian Environmentalism As Love

Question 22 is the only question that inquires about whether Christian environmentalism derives out of love for God's people in other parts of the world. It questions the respondents if they believe that the involvement of Christians in environmental protection shows their love for God's people in other parts of the world; who may bear the environmental consequences that may result from their inaction. As noted earlier, the environmental crisis has no borders as most environmental harms have the ability to cross borders in their effects and some natural resources are shared with other countries.⁸ Negative responses would reveal the lack of such awareness while positive responses would show an understanding with the regard to the depth and far reaching nature of environmental problems.

Questions Pointing to Solutions for Knowledge/Teaching Gaps

Questions 13 and 14 of the survey were designed to point to solutions to the knowledge gaps among Christians. Question 13 inquired from the respondents their opinion on whether Christian leaders could use the pulpit to teach people about true Christian environmental protection and stewardship based on the Bible. Question 14 asked the respondents if they believed it is important for Christian leaders to develop a Bible study curriculum to teach people

⁶ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817-8.

⁷ John C. Bergstrom, "Principles of a Christian Environmental Ethic: With Applications to Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment".

⁸ Ferrante, J, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, 480.

about what the Bible says about environmental protection. The intention in designing these questions was to create a basis for the recommendations with regard to teaching gaps and knowledge gaps among Christians. The answers to these questions were intended to guide the recommendation to be made concerning how knowledge gaps are to be addressed. Critical answers were needed on whether or not biblical environmentalism could be taught from the church pulpit and whether or not in-depth study of biblical environmentalism could be done through a Bible study curriculum.

Questions Pointing To Solutions For Action Gaps

In addition to the questions pointing to solutions to knowledge and teaching gaps, the survey also contained questions that pointed to solutions for action gaps. Question 17 asked the respondents if they think Christian leaders should lead community drives to encourage environmental protection. Question 18 asked if it is good practical leadership in the environmental agenda for the church to practice recycling, water conservation and other environmental measures and let their communities know that this is what they are doing. Additionally, question 19 probed Christian leaders to find out if they believe that churches and other Christian organizations should lobby the government for environmental protection. Finally, question 23 asked if the respondents considered it appropriate for missionaries to third world nations to be involved environmental concerns and spearhead tree planting, suggest ways of dealing with environmental degradation as well as addressing water issues as they try to reach third world nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The responses to these questions were intended to guide this researcher towards the recommended actions that these Christian leaders thought were helpful in the Christian environmental agenda.

Readiness Questions

Questions 16 and 25 were designed to take stock of whether Christian leaders were ready to take action in word and deed to ensure that biblical environmentalism is fanned into flame. Question 16 asks Christian leaders if they believe they are strategically positioned to lead biblical environmentalism in word and action and question 25 asks Christian leaders if they are prepared to stand up and lead the way in true biblical care for the environment. The responses to these questions were meant to expose either that Christian leaders were ready for action based on knowledge of the biblical mandate or if they doubt their strategic position to lead biblical environmentalism or lack the zeal to carry the mandate forward. This is very important because true leadership comes from an understanding of the sonship relationship that the leader has with God and the eagerness to serve and obey God like Jesus did.⁹ This is what enables the leaders to create, articulate and communicate a compelling vision; change what people talk about and dream of; make followers transcend self-interest and enable others to see the world in new ways.¹⁰

Survey Results

Those who agreed to participate in the survey answered the questions and send their responses back to this researcher. All the responses were collected, sorted into the question categories indicated above and compiled by this researcher. The results obtained are presented in Table 1 below:

⁹ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership*.

¹⁰ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership*, 72-77, Kindle.

Table 1: Survey Results

QUESTIONS REVEALING KNOWLEDGE GAPS AMONG CHRISTIAN LEADERS	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
<p>Question 1</p> <p>Do you believe that protecting and caring for the natural environment is important?</p>	<p>Not at all</p> <p>Slightly</p> <p>Somewhat</p> <p>Very</p> <p>Extremely</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>0%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>80%</p>
<p>Question 2</p> <p>Do you believe that taking care of the environment is commanded in Scripture?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>4%</p> <p>90%</p> <p>6%</p>
<p>Question 3</p> <p>Do Christians have a God given mandate to care for the environment?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>85%</p> <p>15%</p>
<p>Question 4</p> <p>Do you believe that environmental stewardship is beneficial for the world?</p>	<p>Not at all</p> <p>Slightly</p> <p>Somewhat</p> <p>Very</p> <p>Extremely</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>4%</p> <p>5%</p> <p>16%</p> <p>75%</p>
<p>Question 7</p> <p>Do you believe that Christians have a role to play in addressing the environmental harms, such as global warming, pollution, climate change, land degradation and water shortages, which our world faces today?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>15%</p> <p>77%</p> <p>8%</p>
QUESTIONS REVEALING KNOWLEDGE GAPS AMONG CHRISTIANS (AS OPPOSED TO LEADERS)	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
<p>Question 11</p> <p>Do you think Christians know enough about what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship?</p>	<p>Not at all</p> <p>Slightly</p> <p>Somewhat</p>	<p>10%</p> <p>57%</p> <p>30%</p>

	Very Extremely	3% 0%
QUESTIONS REVEALING TEACHING/PREACHING GAPS	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
Question 5 Is biblical environmental stewardship and protection preached and taught at your church or ministry?	Not at all Slightly Somewhat Always	60% 27% 10% 3%
Question 6 How often do you preach or offer Bible study lessons about biblical environmental protection and stewardship at your church/ministry per year?	Not at all Seldom Sometimes Most of the time Always	72% 15% 10% 1% 2%
Question 12 Do you think that Pastors and Christian leaders are talking enough with their congregants and audiences about environmental protection and stewardship?	No Yes Not sure	99% 0% 1%
QUESTIONS REVEALING ACTION GAPS	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
Question 15 Do you believe that Christian leaders have engaged in the national environmental debate enough?	Not at all Slightly Somewhat Very Extremely	20% 66% 10% 4% 0%
QUESTIONS DISTINGUISHING THE CHRISTIAN MANDATE	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
Question 8 Is there a difference between what the Bible teaches about caring for the environment and what secular environmental movements have been teaching?	No Yes Not sure	0% 80% 20%
Question 9 Do you believe that Christian leaders have a duty to teach the truth about what the Bible says about caring for the environment?	No Yes Not sure	0% 95% 5%

Question 10		
Do you believe that Christian leaders should leave it up to secular groups to lead the way in environmental protection?	No Yes Not sure	96% 3% 1%
QUESTIONS ON THE THEOCENTRICITY OF BIBLICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM.	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
Question 20		
Does good environmental protection and stewardship amount to obedience to God?	No Yes Not sure	2% 80% 18%
Question 21		
Is it important for Christians to be good and faithful servants of God by exercising good environmental stewardship?	No Yes Not sure	3% 85% 12%
Question 24		
Do you believe that God will be glorified as Christians all over the world engage in biblical environmentalism as mandated by the Scriptures?	No Yes Not sure	0% 94% 6%
QUESTIONS ON BIBLICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM AS LOVE	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
Question 22		
Does the involvement of Christians in environmental protection show their love for God's people in other parts of the world who may bear the environmental consequences that may result from their inaction?	No Yes Not sure	15% 83% 2%
QUESTIONS POINTING TO SOLUTIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE/TEACHING GAPS	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
Question 13		
Can Christian leaders use the pulpit to lead people towards true biblical environmentalism?	Never Only when necessary Sometimes Always	5% 17% 65% 13%
Question 14		
Do you believe it is important for Christian leaders to develop a Bible study curriculum to teach people about what the Bible says about environmental protection?	No Yes Not sure	1% 94% 5%

QUESTIONS POINTING TO SOLUTIONS FOR ACTION GAPS	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
<p>Question 17</p> <p>Do you think Christian leader should lead community drives to encourage environmental protection?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>1%</p> <p>79%</p> <p>20%</p>
<p>Question 18</p> <p>Is it good practical leadership in the environmental agenda for the church to practice recycling, water conservation and other environmental measures and let their communities know that this is what they are doing?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>97%</p> <p>3%</p>
<p>Question 19</p> <p>Do you believe that churches and other Christian organizations should lobby the government for environmental protection?</p>	<p>Not at all</p> <p>Slightly</p> <p>Only when necessary</p> <p>Very much</p> <p>Extremely</p>	<p>19%</p> <p>11%</p> <p>66%</p> <p>3%</p> <p>1%</p>
<p>Question 23</p> <p>Is it appropriate for missionaries to third world nations to be involved environmental concerns and spearhead tree planting, suggest ways of dealing with environmental degradation as well as addressing water issues as they try to reach third world nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>84%</p> <p>16%</p>
READINESS QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE ANSWERS	RESPONSES
<p>Question 16</p> <p>Do you believe that Christian leaders are strategically positioned to lead biblical environmentalism in word and action?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>6%</p> <p>88%</p> <p>6%</p>
<p>Question 25</p> <p>As a Christian leader are you prepared to stand up and lead the way in true biblical care for the environment?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Not sure</p>	<p>0%</p> <p>95%</p> <p>5%</p>

The above table presents the results of the survey based on the responses of the Christian leaders who responded. The results were compiled in percentages of the total one hundred respondents in order to determine the majority and minority views.

Summary of Results

Questions Revealing Knowledge Gaps Among Christian Leaders

As noted earlier, Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 were asked to inquire about knowledge gaps in leadership as it relates to the importance of environmental protection, its biblical basis and the need for Christians to be involved. In response to question 1, which asked whether Christian leaders believe that protecting and caring for the natural environment is important, there was an overwhelming positive response with ninety percent of the respondents stating that it was either very important or extremely important. Only ten percent said it was slightly important and none of the respondents said protecting and caring for the natural environment was either slightly important or not important at all.

In response to question 2, which questioned if Christian leaders believed that taking care of the environment is commanded in Scripture, ninety percent responded positively with a “yes”. Only four percent responded “no” and six percent stated that they were not sure. To question 3, which asked the Christian leaders if they believed Christians have a God given mandate to care for the environment, eighty five percent of the respondents responded positively with the remaining fifteen percent stating that they were not sure.

Concerning question 4, which inquired from the respondents if they believed that environmental stewardship is beneficial for the world, seventy five percent of the respondents stated that it was extremely beneficial and sixteen percent pointed out that it was very beneficial.

None of the respondents felt that it was not important but five percent said it was somewhat important and four percent felt it was slightly important. Finally, in response to question 7, which asked if Christians had a role to play in addressing the environmental harms, such as global warming, pollution, climate change, land degradation and water shortages, which the world faces today, seventy seven percent answered “yes.” Of the remainder, fifteen percent of the respondents answered “no” and eight percent were not sure.

Clearly, the overall response percentages indicate that the majority of Christian leaders are aware of the importance of environmental protection based on what they see in the world today and more importantly based on what the Bible mandates.

Questions Revealing Knowledge Gaps Among Christians

Question 11, which inquired from the respondents whether they think Christians know enough about what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship, was the only question that was meant to reveal knowledge gaps among Christians. The majority response, which was fifty seven percent, was that Christians were slightly aware of the biblical requirement for environmental protection and stewardship. This was followed by those who stated that Christians somewhat knew the biblical mandate and this group comprised thirty percent of the respondents. Ten percent said that Christians did not know at all about what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship. None of the respondent answered that Christians knew extremely well about biblical environmental protection and stewardship and only three percent said Christians were very aware. This question was intended to measure the extent of the knowledge, which is why it did not require a “yes” or “no” answer. The responses to this extent question revealed that Christians only have very limited knowledge about the biblical mandate to steward and protect the environment.

Teaching/Preaching Gap Questions

The Survey results noted in Table 1 revealed that, there are teaching gaps, which could be the reason for the knowledge gaps and lack of action among Christians in environmentalism. The responses to questions 5, 6 and 12 indicated that generally Christian leaders barely preach or teach about biblical environmentalism in their churches or ministries. In response to question 5, which asked if biblical environmental stewardship and protection were preached and taught at the respondents' churches or ministries, the majority answer was "not at all". In fact, sixty percent of the respondents chose the answer "not at all." This was followed by twenty seven percent of the respondents who stated that it was only slightly taught and ten percent who said that it was somewhat taught. Only three percent of the Christian leaders surveyed indicated that they always teach or preach about biblical environmentalism.

In response to question 6, which inquired on how often the respondents preach or offer Bible study lessons about biblical environmental protection and stewardship at their church/ministry per year, the majority answer was "not at all" by seventy two percent of the respondents. Fifteen percent answered that they seldom do so and ten percent answered that they only do so sometimes. Only one percent indicated that they preach or offer Bible study lessons about biblical environmental protection and stewardship sometimes and two percent stated that they do so always.

Finally, in response to question 12, which questioned if Pastors and Christian leaders are talking enough with their congregants and audiences about environmental protection and stewardship, ninety nine percent of the respondents answered "No." None of the respondents answered "Yes" and one percent said that they were not sure. The above results reveal a glaring

teaching/ preaching gap that is most likely the main cause of the knowledge gaps and inaction in biblical environmental protection among Christians.

Questions Revealing Action Gaps

The response to question 15, which questioned Christian leaders if they believe they have engaged in the national environmental debate enough, revealed that sixty six percent of Christian leaders have only taken slight action. This number is made worse by the fact that twenty percent responded that Christian leaders have not engaged at all. This result indicates action gaps that need to be addressed.

Questions Distinguishing The Christian Environmental Mandate

The responses to questions 8, 9 and 10 were very important in distinguishing the Christian mandate in the face of secular movements. Eighty percent of the respondents answered “Yes” to question 8, which inquired from the respondents if there is a difference between what the Bible teaches about caring for the environment and what secular environmental movements have been teaching. In response to question 9, which questioned if respondents believe that Christian leaders have a duty to teach the truth about what the Bible says about caring for the environment, ninety five percent answered “Yes”. Finally in response to question 10, which asked the respondents if they believed that Christian leaders should leave it up to secular groups to lead the way in environmental protection, ninety six percent answered “No.”

The above responses show overwhelmingly that Christian leaders realize that there is a difference between what secular movements are teaching about the environment and what the Bible teaches. The responses also reveal that Christian leaders do not think it is fine for secular movements to take the leadership role but in fact believe that they could correct the record and teach the truth about what the Bible says about caring for the environment.

Questions On The Theocentricity Of Biblical Environmentalism

Questions 20, 21 and 24 were asked to inquire about the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism. In response to question 20, which asks the respondents if good environmental protection and stewardship amount to obedience to God, eighty percent answered “Yes”. Of the remainder, two percent answered, “No” and eighteen percent answered that they were not sure. Pertaining to question 21, which inquired if it is important for Christians to be good and faithful servants of God by exercising good environmental stewardship, eighty five percent answered “Yes,” three percent answered “No” and twelve percent answered that they were not sure. Finally, with regard to question 24, which asked Christian leaders if they believe that God will be glorified as Christians all over the world engage in biblical environmentalism as mandated by the Scriptures, ninety four percent answered “Yes and the remaining six percent answered that they were not sure. None of the respondents answered “No.” The above results reveal that Christian leaders understand that biblical environmentalism derives from God and it amounts to good stewardship and obedience to God, which glories Him.

Questions On Christian Environmentalism As Love

From Table 1, it is clear that question 22 is the only question that was inquires about Christian environmentalism that derives out of love for God’s people in other parts of the world. About eighty three percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if they believe that the involvement of Christians in environmental protection shows their love for God’s people in other parts of the world, who may bear the environmental consequences that may result from their inaction. However, fifteen percent of the respondents answered “No” while two percent answered that they were not sure. The above results reveal an overall understanding

that positive action in biblical environmentalism is a sign of the Christian's love for God's people in other parts of the world who may be affected by the negative environmental impact of their inaction.

Questions Pointing To Solutions For Knowledge/Teaching Gaps

The survey was intended to also point to solutions for the knowledge and teaching gaps, and questions 13 and 14 were the questions designed to point to solutions in these areas. Sixty five percent of the respondents stated that was that it was fine to use the pulpit sometimes in response to question 13, which inquired from the respondents if Christian leaders could use the pulpit to lead people towards true biblical environmentalism. Only thirteen percent said it was fine to always use the pulpit to preach biblical environmental protection and seventeen percent said it was fine to do so only when necessary. Five percent of the respondents stated that it was never fine to use the pulpit to preach biblical environmentalism. With regard to question 14, which asked the respondents if they believed it was important for Christian leaders to develop a Bible study curriculum to teach people about what the Bible says about environmental protection, ninety five percent of the respondents answered "Yes." Of the remaining six percent, one percent answered "No" and five percent answered that they were not sure. The above results indicate hesitancy with regard to using the pulpit and openness to the use of a Bible study curriculum to teach biblical environmental protection and stewardship.

Questions Pointing To Solutions For Action Gaps

As with knowledge and teaching gaps above, there were questions in the survey intended to point to solutions for action gaps. These were questions 17, 18, 19 and 23. When asked if they think Christian leaders should lead community drives to encourage environmental protection on question 17, the respondents, seventy nine percent of the respondents answered "Yes," one

percent answered “No” and twenty percent stated that they were not sure. In response to question 18, which asked if it is good practical leadership in the environmental agenda for the church to practice recycling, water conservation and other environmental measures and let their communities know that this is what they are doing, ninety seven percent answered “Yes” and the remaining three percent answered that they were not sure.

Concerning question 19, which sought to find out if Christian leaders believe that churches and other Christian organizations should lobby the government for environmental protection, sixty six percent responded that it was fine to do so only when necessary, nineteen percent stated that they should not do it at all and eleven percent stated that it was slightly fine to do so. The resoundingly positive responses, which indicated that it was very or extremely important to lobby government on environmental issues, only comprised four percent of the responses. Finally with regard to question 23, which asked if the respondents considered it appropriate for missionaries to third world nations to be involved environmental concerns as they try to reach third world nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, eighty four percent answered “Yes” and the remaining sixteen percent stated that they were not sure. The above responses reveal that Christian leaders think community drives, leading by example(engaging in recycling and good environmental measures in their ministries and environmental missions are good ideas as the way forward is devised. However, there is an apparent hesitancy with regard to the extent to which churches and Christian ministries can lobby government about environmental protection.

Readiness Questions

Analysis of readiness was assessed in light of the responses to questions 16 and 25, which were designed to determine if Christian leaders were ready to take action in word and deed to

ensure that biblical environmentalism is activated. In response to question 16, which asked Christian leaders if they believe they are strategically positioned to lead biblical environmentalism in word and action, eighty eight percent of the respondents answered “Yes” while six percent answered “No” and the remaining six percent answered “Not Sure.” In response to question 25, which inquired if Christian leaders are prepared to stand up and lead the way in true biblical care for the environment, ninety five percent of the Christian leaders answered “Yes” and the remaining five percent answered that they were not sure. From the above responses, it can be assessed that generally Christian leaders view themselves as strategically positioned and are ready for action. Even though some responses were negative, the numbers of negative responses were very small.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This chapter analyzes the results of the survey based on the survey responses presented in Table 1 in the previous chapter. It analyzes these results to reveal the implication of the views of Christian leaders concerning biblical environmentalism. The data in the results table was categorized for easy analysis under question analysis categories indicated earlier. This was based on Schatzman and Strauss's claim that qualitative data analysis primarily entails classifying things and the properties that characterize them.¹ The question categories/classifications used divided the twenty five survey questions into ten categories revealing leadership knowledge gaps, knowledge gaps pertaining to Christians, preaching and teaching gaps, action gaps, distinguishers of the Christian mandate, and pointers to theocentricism in biblical environmentalism, Christian environmentalism as an expression of love, readiness questions and pointers to solutions. This allowed the researcher to analyze the survey results in their categories not as individual questions. The result was an overall impression from the results of the survey as detailed in this chapter, and an attempt was made to understand and explain the patterns and themes.²

Leadership Knowledge Gaps

From the responses on the questions revealing knowledge gaps among Christian leaders, it was clear that generally Christian leaders are aware of the importance of environmental protection based on what they see in the world today and more importantly based on what the Bible mandates. The majority of responses were positive, thus affirming the importance of the

¹ Leonard Schatzman & Anselm L. Strauss, *Field Research*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Premier Hall, 1973).

² Michael Agar, *Speaking of Ethnography*, (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1986).

biblical mandate to protect the environment. Even though the situation on the ground indicates that Christians are still lagging behind in environmentalism,³ the results indicate a far less severe situation with regards to where the leaders are and where they need to be. This is because where there is knowledge and understanding of the Christian environmental protection mandate among Christian leaders, the only thing that remains to focus on will be for them to start taking action and encourage others to do the same.

Perhaps the only problematic aspect of the responses to the questions revealing knowledge gaps among Christian leaders was with regard to questions 3 and 7, where the negative responses were a bit high even though the overall majority response was positive. On question 3, fifteen percent of the Christian leaders stated that they were not sure Christians have a God given mandate to care for the environment. While fifteen percent still indicates a minority view, it is problematic because the 100 respondents were Christian leaders. Christian leaders are supposed to know that Christians have a God given mandate to care for the environment because they study the Bible and are trained on it in Bible school or in church in-house leadership development programs before they begin to serve God. If fifteen of the one hundred Christian leaders surveyed are not sure, this is pretty significant. This is especially worrying, given the fact that leaders need to be knowledgeable in order to be able to lead and guide God's people well.⁴

With regard to question 7, fifteen percent of the respondents answered "no" and eight percent were not sure when asked if Christians had a role to play in addressing the environmental harms, such as global warming, pollution, climate change, land degradation and water shortages,

³ Fred VanDyke, *Between Heaven and Earth: Christian Perspectives on Environmental Protection* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2010).

⁴ Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, 4.

which the world faces today. This means that of the 100 Christian leaders surveyed, twenty three percent do not understand the importance of Christians playing a role in addressing environmental harms. This is problematic, given that the Bible is clear about mankind's stewardship mandate.⁵

The negative responses reveal that though the majority of Christian leaders are aware of the importance of environmental protection, a significant amount of them, roughly one sixth, are still lagging behind in terms of knowledge. They do not understand the importance of environmental protection, its biblical basis and the need for Christians to be involved. This would point to a gap in training on Christian environmentalism or environmental ethics in Christian seminaries or church leadership training programs. Every Christian leader has to know about biblical environmentalism because it is part of God's agenda on the earth. There is no excuse for such lack of knowledge among Christian leaders because as moral guides, they have to know what they are teaching and providing guidance on.⁶

Knowledge gaps Pertaining to Christians

From the results revealed in chapter 3, it is clear from the majority of negative responses to Question 11 that Christians only have minimal knowledge about the biblical mandate to steward and protect the environment. This in itself is indicative of a huge knowledge gap among Christians concerning the importance of environmental stewardship and its existence as a biblical mandate. This knowledge gap is probably what is causing so much inaction by Christians in environmental protection because it is difficult to stand for something if you do not know or understand its importance. The graph below indicates the responses to question 11, which

⁵ Genesis 2:15, 1:28(NASB).

⁶ Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, 4.

inquired from Christian leaders if they believed that Christians know enough about biblical environmental protection and stewardship.

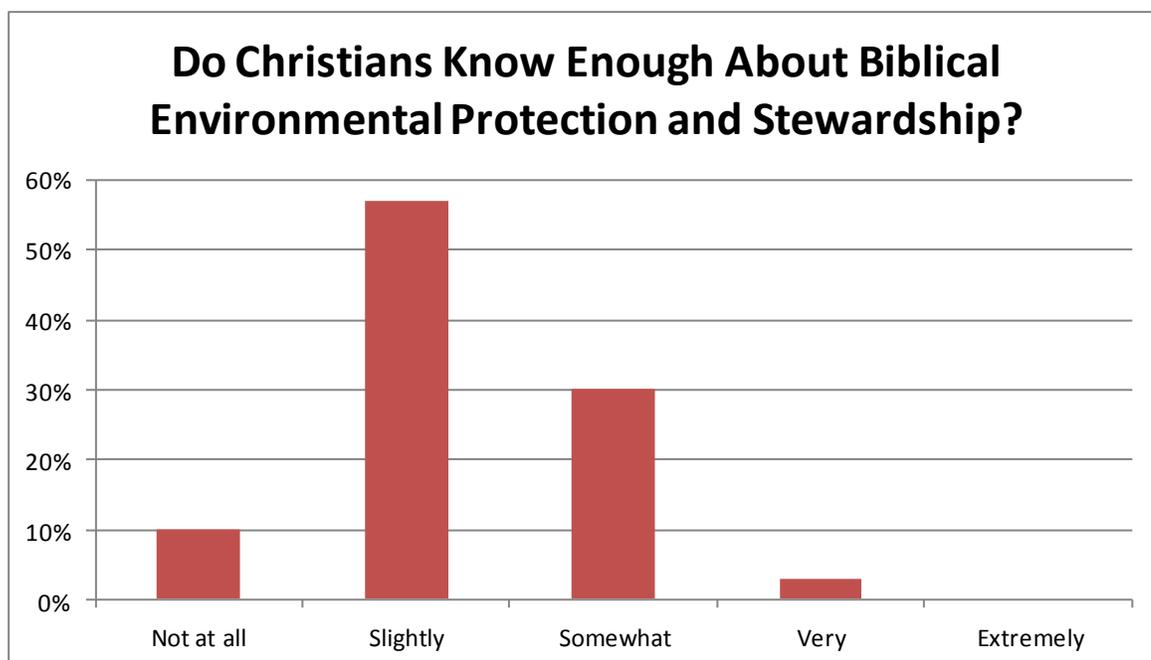


Fig 1: Knowledge Gaps Pertaining to Christians

The results above clearly revealed that the knowledge gap among Christians is great given that only four percent of the Christian leaders surveyed indicated that they thought Christians were very aware of what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship. Four percent is such a low number in comparison to thirty percent who confessed that Christians somewhat knew and fifty seven percent, who felt that Christians were slightly aware of the biblical requirement for environmental protection and stewardship. The remaining ten percent felt that Christians knew nothing at all about this. Added together, these negative and hesitant responses come to ninety six percent of the total responses. This shows a deep knowledge gap which cannot be ignored. Such a knowledge gap points to the need for action on

the part of Christian leaders to fill that gap as they lead people towards God's agenda here on earth. This is especially important in the face of the fact that environmental stewardship is a biblical mandate as proved in Chapter 2 of this thesis project. The Bible states that people perish because of lack of knowledge.⁷ Therefore, critical steps have to be taken to take care of the knowledge gaps on Christian environmentalism, that exist among Christians to ensure that positive change can begin to take place. It is most likely true that Christians do not act in taking care of the environment because they do not know that it is a biblical mandate.

Teaching and Preaching Gaps

The results for questions indicating preaching/teaching gaps are indicative of a glaring teaching gap. This shows that, only a few Christian leaders are taking the time to either preach or teach about biblical environmental protection in their churches or ministries. No wonder that ninety nine percent of the respondents answered "No" when asked if Pastors and Christian leaders are talking enough with their congregants and audiences about environmental protection and stewardship. In fact, there is very little deliberate effort to develop a teaching or preaching curriculum on biblical environmental stewardship. This was indicated by the fact that when asked how often they preach or offer Bible study lessons about biblical environmental protection and stewardship at their church/ministry per year, seventy-two percent of the Christian leaders surveyed answered "not at all."

The above scenario is very problematic because if Christians are not taught about biblical environmental protection and stewardship, there is no hope that they will put it into practice. The Bible states that people fall where there is no guidance but in the abundance of leaders who

⁷ Hosea 4:6(NASB).

teach, guide and counsel, there is victory.⁸ The silence of Christian leaders clearly causes a problem because it leads to the destruction of the people whom God has placed under their leadership. No wonder that Sweeney states that, “It’s not people who are right who change the world. It’s people who can communicate their definition of right to others who change the world.”⁹ From the above, it is clear that there is a problem when leaders remain and do not communicate their definition of right to others based on the Bible. Furthermore, the Bible also questions how people can hear without anyone preaching to them.¹⁰ This means that the role of Christian leaders in preaching the Word of God is critical if Christians are fully to become and do all that God wants them to be and do. Even so with environmental protection, it is not logical to assume that people will just end up knowing about what the Bible says about it without anyone sharing that aspect of the Word with them. The survey results show that Christian leaders have failed in this regard because Elmer Towns notes that the mark of a true leader is the ability to influence and persuade others to follow.¹¹ This is something that cannot happen when Christian leaders are not teaching or preaching about important biblical principles such as environmental protection and stewardship. From this, it is tempting to assume that this deep teaching/preaching gap has been highly responsible for the knowledge gaps and inaction among Christians on biblical environmental protection.

The existence of teaching/preaching gaps is very surprising though. This is because the survey indicated that most Christian leaders are aware of the Scriptural basis of biblical environmentalism and stewardship. This raises the question of whether Christian leaders are just

⁸ Proverbs 11:14 (NASB).

⁹ Leonard Sweet, *Aqua Church*, 167.

¹⁰ Romans 10:14(NASB).

¹¹ Elmer Towns, *The Eight Laws of Leadership*, 10.

not teaching or preaching biblical environmentalism because of a fear of being unpopular with anti-environmental Christian movements or being likened to secular environmental movements who are advocating environmental protection though not from a biblical understanding. It could also be that Christian leaders are just not taking seriously what the Bible says about environmental stewardship or no one has truly emphasized its importance to them.

Recommendations will be made to address the teaching/preaching gaps as well as remove the factors that may cause Christian leaders to be hesitant to teach or preach about environmental protection as a God-given mandate.

Action Gaps

The responses to Question 15, which was designed to reveal action gaps, are detailed in the chart below for easy analysis:

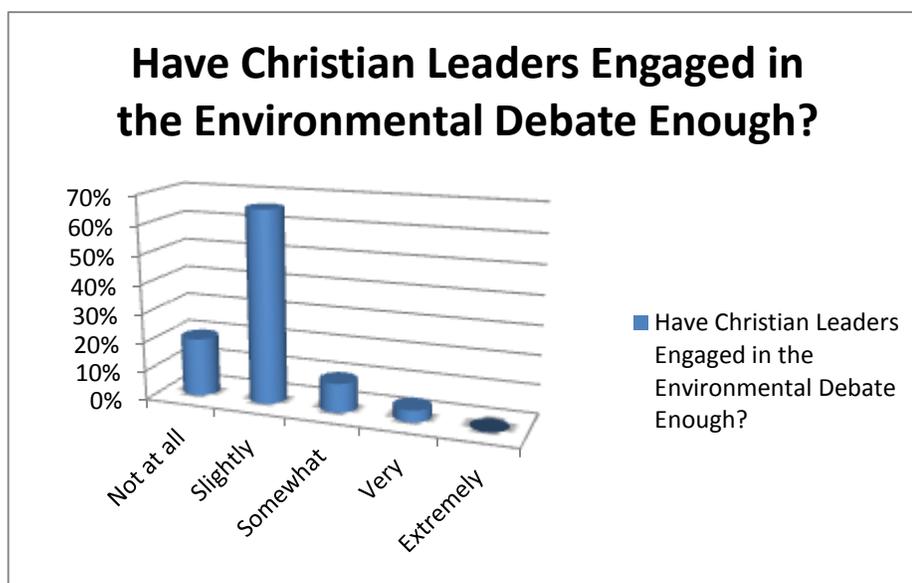


Fig. 2: Action Gaps

The above results revealed that Christian leaders are not taking much action in the mainstream to ensure that the environment is being protected. Not engaging in national forums

and debates that deal with environmentalism reveals that Christian leaders are lagging behind in positive action that could help protect the environment. The negative responses(Not at All, Slightly and Somewhat) to this question were in the majority, indicating major action gaps that would require change on the part of Christian leaders to ensure that their congregants and followers see them in action and follow suit. The affirmative responses(Very and Extremely), which would reveal positive involvement in environmental debates on the part of Christian leaders, are very limited. If Christian leaders continue to lag behind in their leadership of biblical environmental protection, no corresponding action will be manifested on the ground on the part of Christians.

The above state of affairs cannot be tolerated because the Bible requires Christian leaders to lead by example. It states specifically that Christian leaders should shepherd the flock of God according to His will as well as lead by example.¹² Clearly, leaders are to exercise due diligence in their leadership and shepherding; teaching their flock all things and leading by example in all things that the Bible mandates. When Christian leaders, do not do this as revealed by the results, this leaves Christians with nothing to emulate.

The Bible states that, faith without works is dead¹³ and that such dead faith will not profit a man.¹⁴ Therefore, if Christians are live to their fullest potential as Christians, they have to act on the word of God. It is not enough to believe that God's Word is true without acting on it. This is reinforced by James 1:22-23, which states that believers have to be doers of the word not just hearers.

¹² 1 Peter 5:2-4(NASB).

¹³ James 2:26(NASB).

¹⁴ James 2:14(NASB).

Distinguishing the Christian Environmental Mandate

The importance of distinguishing the Christian mandate from secular views was noted earlier in Chapter Two. Therefore, the questions (questions 8 and 9) that were asked to reveal if Christian leaders were aware of this difference were intended to create a platform upon which to provide recommendations, if necessary, for helping Christian leaders understand this difference and distinguish their Christian mandate. For easy analysis, the results for question 8 of the survey were placed in the chart below:

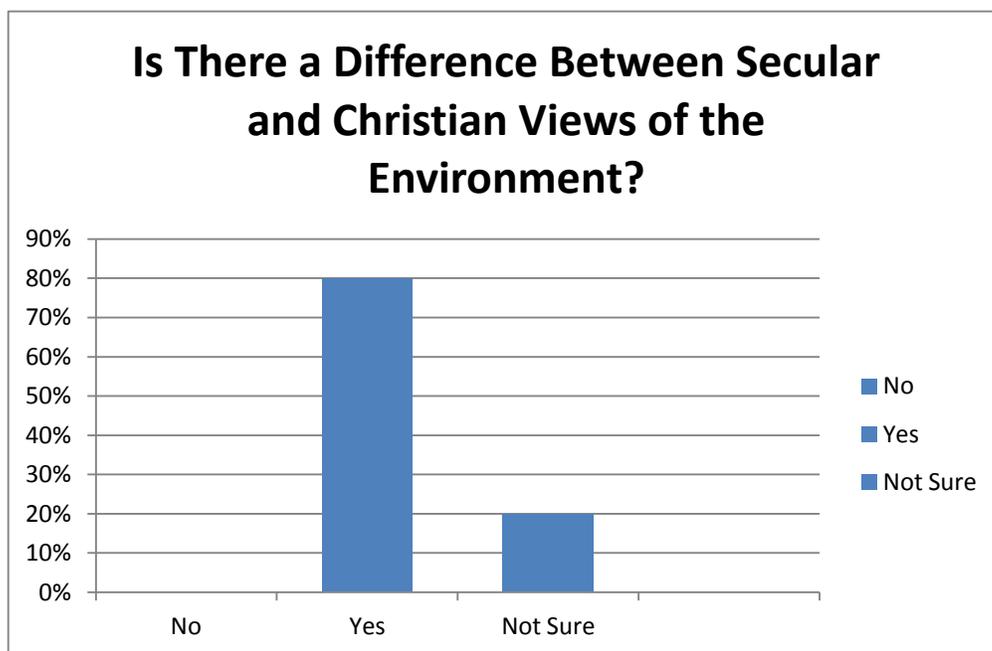


Fig. 3: Distinguishing the Christian Mandate

It is clear from the results revealed in the chart/graph above that Christian leaders realize that there is a difference between what secular movements are teaching about the environment and what the Bible teaches as revealed by the majority answer “yes,” which made up eighty percent of the responses. None of the Christian leaders answered “no,” which would have revealed a lack of knowledge of this difference. This is very encouraging given that some of

these movements are mostly humanistic, pantheistic or atheistic¹⁵ and their teachings are inconsistent with the Bible. It is true that a lot of the environmentalism that is seen today has been driven by these secular movements. However, while the active environmentalism that has resulted is to be commended, the teachings of these movements have to be corrected as some even believe nature is to be worshipped like God.¹⁶ From a Christian perspective, it is known that while nature has to be respected and cared for as God's creation, this does not mean that mankind has to worship it.¹⁷ That is why it is encouraging that Christian leaders do understand the difference between the secular views and the Christian views. Christian leaders have to be aware of this difference in order to effectively lead in the environmental agenda.

While the awareness of the differences between the secular and Christian views of environmental protection is apparent, the fact that twenty percent of the Christian leaders stated that they were not sure of this difference is troubling. This is because Christian leaders are the ones supposed to lead the way in the biblical environmental protection agenda. If they are not sure of the difference, they might end up preaching a theology of nature that reeks of pantheism, materialism or other neo-paganist views of the environment.

In spite of the above, it brings a lot of hope to realize that Christian leaders see themselves as the ones with the role of leading the way and teaching the truth about what true biblical environmentalism is as revealed by the responses to question 9. In fact, ninety six percent of the Christian leaders surveyed indicated that it was not good for Christian leaders to leave it up to secular groups to lead the way in environmental protection.

Clearly, the results revealed that the Christian environmental mandate is distinct from

¹⁵ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*.

¹⁶ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*.

¹⁷ Dale and Sandy Larsen, *While Creation Waits*.

secular teachings and that leaders need to teach this truth. Therefore, any recommendation that is to be made has to take cognizance of this fact and be based on environmental stewardship as defined by the Bible. No other theory of nature meets the standard of truth that the Bible brings and should not be used as the basis of the theology of nature that will be recommended.

The Theocentric nature of Biblical Environmentalism

To ensure easy analysis a multi-bar chart was used to indicate the results of the questions that were asked to reveal if Christian leaders understand the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism. The chart 4 below reveals the results to questions 20, 21 and 24, which pertain to the theocentric nature of Christian environmentalism:

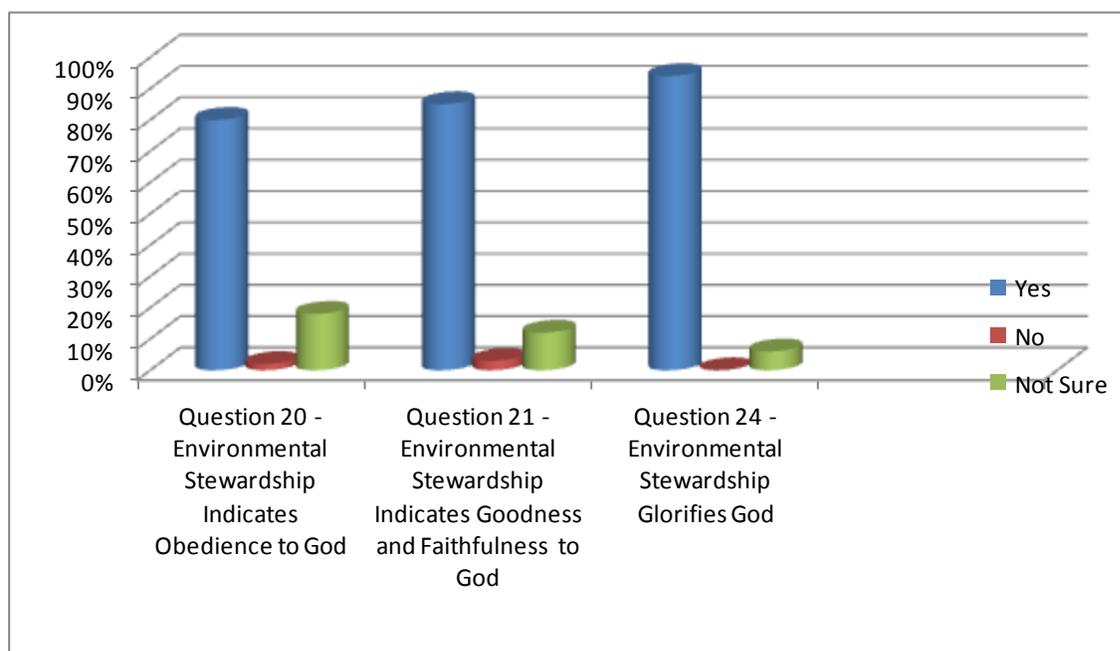


Fig. 4: Theocentric Nature of Biblical Environmentalism

The results of questions 20, 21 and 24 showed that Christian leaders understand that Christian environmentalism is a God-given mandate as revealed by the majority “yes” responses as opposed to the “no” and “not sure” responses. This derives from the understanding that Christians love nature because God created it, loves it and has given them a mandate to take care

of nature, which He will finally redeem.¹⁸ He cares for nature and maintains it as a very present and faithful landlord, who faithfully does everything necessary to ensure that creation functions as He created it to.¹⁹ The responses also reveal that Christian leaders understand that biblical environmentalism derives from God not just man's love for nature. It is also clear that Christian leaders understand that taking care of the environment amounts to good stewardship and obedience to God, who gets the glory when things go according to His plan. This is because Christian environmentalism always derives from God and this means that mankind cares for nature but serves and worships God alone.²⁰

While the majority of the responses were positive revealing an understanding of the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism, it was worrying that about eighteen percent of Christian leaders answered that they were not sure when asked if good environmental protection and stewardship amount to obedience to God. One wonders how such a large percentage of the sample of Christian leaders would not know about this given that they spend a lot of time studying the Bible and should have been trained about this in seminary. As if that were not enough, twelve percent of the respondents answered that they were not sure when asked if it is important for Christians to be good and faithful servants of God by exercising good environmental stewardship. Such lack of knowledge is worrying, even though the majority of the responses revealed awareness. It is this researcher's opinion that no Christian leader should be unaware of biblical environmentalism, given that the Bible speaks about it clearly. God is the

¹⁸ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*

¹⁹ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

²⁰ Dan Story, 2236-2239, Kindle.

creator²¹ and owner of all things²² and has entrusted the earth and its resources to mankind's care. Mankind has to become trustworthy stewards of what God has entrusted²³ because a time is coming when those who destroy the earth will be judged.²⁴

Christian Environmentalism as an Expression of Love

As noted earlier, question 22 was asked to inquire from Christian leaders if Christian environmentalism was an expression of love for God's people in other parts of the world who may be affected by environmental inaction. The responses to question 22 were presented in the bar chart below for easy analysis.



Fig. 5: Christian Environmentalism As An Expression of Love

The results revealed that eighty three percent of the respondents know that the

²¹ Genesis 1:1 (NASB).

²² Psalm 24:1; Job 41:11(NASB).

²³ 1 Corinthians 4:2(NASB).

²⁴ Revelation 11:18(NASB).

involvement of Christians in environmental protection shows their love for God's people in other parts of the world; who may bear the environmental consequences that may result from their inaction. This shows knowledge and understanding of the depth and far reaching nature of environmental problems. As noted earlier, the environmental crisis has no borders as most environmental harms have the ability to cross borders in their effects and some natural resources are shared with other countries.²⁵ It was, therefore, very encouraging that Christian leaders know that the love of God can be revealed by how they relate to nature in order to mitigate environmental harm that might affect other people elsewhere in the world. Inaction shows a lack of care or concern for those who bear the brunt of the negative environmental consequences that may cross borders. The fact that the majority of Christian leaders understand environmentalism as an act of love could be a positive take-off point for action because the Bible states that whoever does not love does not know God because God is love.²⁶

As with the questions on knowledge gaps and the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism, there were a large number of negative responses even though the majority was positive. About fifteen percent of the respondents answered "No" when asked if the involvement of Christians in environmental protection shows their love for God's people in other parts of the world who may be affected by their inaction. Fifteen percent is a large number given that these are Christian leaders who are supposed to live in love for God's people and lead others towards such love. It is worrying that fifteen percent of Christian leaders did not care about those who were affected by their environmental inaction and did not see their positive action in biblical environmentalism as a sign of love. This aspect has to be addressed even though the majority

²⁵ Ferrante, 480.

²⁶ 1 John 4:8(NASB).

seems to understand.

Pointers to Solutions for Knowledge and Teaching Gaps

The results on the questions that were intended to point to solutions for the knowledge and teaching gaps revealed hesitancy with regard to teach biblical environmentalism from the pulpit and an openness to the development of a Bible study curriculum that teaches people about what the Bible says about environmental protection. This shows that Christian leaders are hesitant to always preach environmentalism from church pulpits as if it were the main concern of the church over the salvation of souls. The majority response to question 13, which inquired about the use of the pulpit to preach environmentalism, was that it was fine to use the pulpit only sometimes. Only thirteen percent said it was fine to always use the pulpit to preach biblical environmental protection and seventeen percent said it was fine to do so only when necessary. If the majority of the respondents had indicated that it was always fine to use the pulpit, this would have indicated openness to the idea. However, the fact that the majority said it was fine to use the pulpit only sometimes, reveals some reservations. There is clearly a dilemma as Christian leader struggle between the burden to fulfill the mandate to protect the environment and yet protecting the pulpit so that environmental protection would not be the main thing being preached out of it. Perhaps it could be based on the understanding that the Great Commission,²⁷ which calls for preaching the gospel and making disciples of all nations,²⁸ is the main mandate of the Christian church. This thesis project does not intend to take away from that but it intends to offer solutions, based on these results, that takes in account the evangelistic mission of the church while also incorporating activism in other areas, such as biblical environmental protection, which are a

²⁷ Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19(NASB).

²⁸ Matthew 28:19(NASB).

critical part of God's agenda on earth and for which there will be repercussions for inaction²⁹ and rewards for good stewardship.³⁰ Dan Story outlines this dilemma nicely when he states that, "Environmentalism is not a religion. Nor is the earth the center of our existence. That would smack of neo-paganism. Jesus Christ is the center of our existence and the earth and all things "live and move and have their being" in Him (Acts 17:28)...we care for nature but serve and worship God."³¹ He shows that environmentalism is not to be exalted above Jesus nor should it take His place in the church as some Christian leaders seem to be hesitant to do. This would not be the Christian thing to do. Therefore, the hesitancy by Christian leaders to replace Jesus with environmentalism is good but the point that question 13 intended to inquire on was not if it was fine to replace Jesus with environmentalism in pulpit preaching but if it is fine to also use the pulpit to preach about the environment in the context of Christ, who is the center of all existence.³² If Christian environmentalism is taught in the context of Christ, the basis for the hesitancy will be stripped away.

The results also revealed that the majority of Christian leaders were open to a Bible study curriculum to teach people about what the Bible says about environmental protection. This is consistent with the fact that these leaders acknowledged knowledge gaps among Christians as well as teaching gaps on biblical environmentalism in their own leadership styles. Therefore, the development of a Bible study curriculum is their idea of how to cover the knowledge and teaching gaps by teaching the matter of biblical environmentalism during Bible study sessions.

²⁹ Revelation 11:18(NASB).

³⁰ Revelation 22:12(NASB).

³¹ Dan Story, 2236-2239, Kindle.

³² Acts 17:28(NASB).

Pointers to Solutions for Action Gaps

An analysis of the results of the questions that point to solutions for action gaps reveals that Christian leaders think that community drives, leading by example (engaging good environmental measures in their ministries) and environmental missions are good ideas as the way forward is devised. These responses will be used as ready guidance in formulating the framework that is to be recommended for Christian leaders in the environmental agenda.

The idea of Christian leaders leading community drives could have arisen from the fact that leaders are natural organizers and strategists. They are also problem solvers and goal setters.³³ They are able to set new goals for God's people because God has strategically positioned them as goal setters. They are also involved in vision casting, innovation, team building³⁴ and this makes them valuable organizers and strategists.³⁵ This means that if they lead community action to clean up the environment, recycle or be more environmentally aware and active, many people will become involved. This is in line with what churches already do with their community outreaches for the purpose of evangelism or church growth. Like Nehemiah when he led the rebuilding of the ruined walls of Jerusalem, Christian leader are clearly viewed as able to start Kingdom projects and see the realization of the vision³⁶

Perhaps the only thing that raises questions is the fact that when asked if they think Christian leaders should lead community drives to encourage environmental protection on question 17, twenty percent of the respondents answered that they were not sure. It is problematic when such a high number of Christian leaders are not sure about being active in

³³ Elmer Towns, *The Eight Laws of Leadership*.

³⁴ Ken Boa, *The Perfect Leader*.

³⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, 137–52.

³⁶ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering*.

Bible based environmentalism and this could be indicative of a hesitancy to step out.

The idea of churches and Christian ministries themselves practicing recycling, water conservation and other environmental measures and letting their communities know that this is what they are doing, was probably popular because it is leading by example. Many communities appreciate and follow leaders who lead by example. Christian leaders also know that the Bible commends leaders who lead by example.³⁷ This could have been why Christian leaders felt that if the church itself would lead the way; this would encourage others to follow in the church's footsteps.

Environmental missions may have received such a favorable response because the environment is so important to most third world nations. Therefore, missions agendas which include activities such as spear-heading tree planting, suggesting ways of dealing with environmental degradation as well as addressing water issues, would be dear to the hearts of third world residents. In most third world nations, people, especially children, die daily because of consumption of dirty water, people cannot find wood fuel for cooking because deforestation has destroyed all their forests and the land is not fertile enough to produce crop because of land degradation. From this, it cannot be denied that most third world populations and communities are intimately and directly dependent on the environment for sustenance. This is why the environment matters to them so much. It would, therefore, not make sense for them for missionaries to go to third world nations and preach the love of God to them and not care for the environment that is of great importance to them.

Although, community drives, leading by example and environmental missions seemed popular, the compiled results of question 19 revealed an apparent hesitancy with regard to the extent to which churches and Christian ministries can lobby government about environmental

³⁷ 1 Peter 5: 2-4.

protection. This was so despite the fact that in a democratic society people should be able to stand up for the things they believe in. The hesitancy to lobby government was seen in the fact that resoundingly positive responses, which indicated that it was either very or extremely important to lobby government on environmental issues, only comprised four percent of the responses. The main response was that it was fine to do so only when necessary. This emphasis on lobbying only when necessary could be because of the hesitancy of Christian ministries to be involved in anything that could cost them their tax-exempt status. This is because of the restrictions on lobbying placed by the Internal Revenue Service(IRS) on exempt charitable organizations that fall under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.³⁸ This code restricts tax exempt organizations from engaging in substantial lobbying.³⁹ Most churches and Christian ministries are 501(c)(3) organizations and so these limitations would apply to them.⁴⁰ It is clear that most Christian leaders are afraid to engage in lobbying beyond the extent that is allowable. That is why the majority response was that it was fine to lobby only when necessary.

Analysis of Readiness

The responses to the readiness questions generally revealed that Christian leaders view themselves as strategically positioned to lead the way in true biblical environmentalism and are ready for action to ensure that this happens. This apparent readiness could be as a result of the leaders' understanding of the biblical mandate or a general fear of the Lord and a willingness to do His will. Henry and Richard Blackaby point leaders to Jesus' model of leadership which was premised on His obedience to the Father's will. This means that good spiritual leaders are good

³⁸ <http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/policysocial-context/16636-restrictions-on-lobbying-by-exempt-organizations-how-much-advocacy-is-too-much.html> .

³⁹ Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

⁴⁰ <http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Charitable-Organizations> .

followers and do everything that the Father reveals to them of His will⁴¹ In this context the high positive response is a good sign as it revealed that Christian leaders do not doubt their strategic position to lead biblical environmentalism and possess the zeal to carry the mandate forward.

This begs the question of why then the action gaps exist if Christian leaders know their strategic position and are ready for action. Perhaps Christian leaders are just hesitant to act because of political reasons or for fear of opposition even though they know what they are supposed to do. It could also be that there is a general complacency to act for fear of being seen as siding with secular movements who have generally been the most active in environmental issues. Despite all this, the results reveal a readiness of action that could propel Christian leaders to take their place and lead the way in biblical environmental protection and stewardship.

Summary of Analysis

The analysis of results has revealed apparent action, knowledge and teaching gaps. This was very helpful in understanding the cause of inaction in environmental protection among Christians even though this is a biblical mandate. Closing these gaps will therefore be the focus of some aspects of the recommended framework for leaders in the next chapter. In addition to the gaps that need to be filled, the analysis of results unveiled an understanding on the part of Christian leaders of the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism, its reflection of love for God's people in other parts of the world and a readiness to act. However, hesitancy was also noted where the amount of "Not sure" responses was high. This hesitancy could have been because of knowledge gaps or fear of opposition or even fear of stepping out. The framework that will be recommended will seek to cover hesitancy points to ensure that Christian leaders can boldly step out and lead the way in biblical environmental protection. The pointers in the survey were also very helpful in identifying areas of recommendation that would take care of the

⁴¹ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 29.

knowledge, teaching and action gaps. The framework of action for leaders will be based on these pointers, as well as other solutions to the apparent knowledge, teaching and action gaps that were revealed.

CHAPTER V

SEVEN KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

From this thesis project, it is clear that there are many gaps in the way leaders have dealt with the issue of environmental protection. This is the reason why there has been a lack of action with regard to environmental matters among Christians. This state of affairs cannot be tolerated because this thesis project proved that environmental stewardship is a biblical mandate given to mankind by God. What is needed is, therefore, a change in attitude and a focus on what Christian leaders can do to help motivate their congregants and followers to greater biblical environmentalism. It is a time for moving away from complacency in biblical environmentalism and engage in what God wants Christians to do rather than be stuck in the dilemma of failing to do that which is known to be right in the eyes of God.¹

The Bible states that faith without works is dead² and it will do a man no good.³ It also states that Christians have to be doers of the Word not just hearers.⁴ The seven key recommendations in this chapter are intended to guide Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards active biblical environmentalism that addresses current environmental threats. These key recommendations touch on prayer, statement of beliefs on nature, environmental stewardship education, leading the way locally, environmental missions and evangelism, lobbying government and leadership development. When Christian leaders take their rightful place in the environmental agenda, this will help all Christians to become active in biblical environmental protection and avoid the judgment that is promised to

¹ Romans 7: 15(NASB).

² James 2:26(NASB).

³ James 2:14(NASB).

⁴ James 1:22-23(NASB).

those who destroy the earth.⁵

Prayer

This thesis project proved the theocentric nature of biblical environmentalism⁶ and even the Christian leaders interviewed understood that Christian environmentalism begins with God. Since this is the case, prayer is a natural first recommendation if Christian leaders are to motivate biblical environmental protection among their congregants and followers. In emphasizing the value of prayer, Earley notes that in the lives of all the great spiritual leaders he has studied, prayer is the common denominator. These spiritual leaders may have possessed different gifts, talents, personalities, backgrounds, education or social status but all of them had one common quality, which is prayer, the "...nonnegotiable tool in every high impact leader's toolkit."⁷ There is no doubt that when a Christian leader prays, impact is increased and when they don't effectiveness is diminished. It is important to also note that Jesus truly lived a life of prayer and His ministry is to be a model for the Christian leader of today. Christian leaders have to make Jesus their model of leadership and remain prayerful as He did.

In approaching prayer, it will be important for Christian leaders to repent and confess their past inaction in biblical environmentalism before God. This is because failure to act in this regard amounts to disobedience to God's stewardship mandate. When one realizes that biblical environmentalism is theocentric, it will be easy to understand that inaction in environmental management is an act of disobedience to God. Clearly, asking for forgiveness and repentance (changing course/direction from the negative to the positive) is a critical first step as Christian

⁵ Revelation 11:18(NASB).

⁶ Dan Story, 2236-2239, Kindle.

⁷ Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders*, (Chattanooga, Tennessee: Living Ink Books (an imprint of AMG Publishers), 2008), ix.

leaders begin to take their place because the Bible states that God is faithful and just to forgive those who ask for it and cleanse them of all unrighteousness.⁸

After confession and repentance, the next step would be prayer for direction and strength. Prayer will make sure that environmentalism among Christians begins with God, who is to lead and guide the process every step of the way, until He finally renews⁹ nature in eschatology. When Christian leaders pray, God will direct their paths and ensure their success in their faithfulness¹⁰, fruitfulness¹¹ and their ability to finish well.¹² Prayers can also be made for God's guidance on areas in which to begin to act. This is important because there are many environmental projects that churches and ministries can engage in. However, success comes when churches and ministries engage in God's purpose for them that fits the season in which they are in. Even Henry and Richard Blackaby state that prayer is an essential leadership activity as it reveals God's wisdom and agenda and, brings the power to accomplish His purpose.¹³ Clearly Christian leaders have to pray if they are to step out of their comfort zones and begin to act in leading biblical environmental stewardship. Opposition will come but Christian leaders who pray will be able to stand against it and prevail in their commitment to obey God in biblical environmental protection and stewardship.

At this point, it is important to note that zeal to act in God's environmental agenda will

⁸ John 1:9(NASB).

⁹ Revelation 11:1(NASB).

¹⁰ Mt 25:21, Hebrews 11:6(NASB).

¹¹ John 15:8(NASB).

¹² 2 Timothy 4:6-8(NASB).

¹³ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*.

come from a relationship of sonship with God.¹⁴ Jesus lived to do the Father's will and remained connected to the One who sent Him in prayer. Christian leaders, therefore, have to pray and seek to know and do God's will in order for them to be effective. This will allow God to continually be the central aspect of the environmental commitments of churches and Christian ministries and He will make a way for environmental stewardship progress even where there seems to be no way. When leaders pray, God will provide the zeal to act, the favor and anointing to be accepted and heard and the influence to change people's minds concerning biblical environmental protection.

Christian leaders will also need to make it the assignment of prayer groups at their churches and ministries to pray for them¹⁵ for wisdom as they engage their communities with the message of nature's value to God. These prayer groups have to pray for their church or ministry to keep their environmental commitments to ensure credibility. Furthermore, it is also important to pray for communities affected by environmental degradation and seek God's direction on how the church can help. When followers and congregants begin to pray for their leaders and the environmental commitments of the church, God will ignite in them a sense of urgency to act in environmental protection in their local communities and even abroad.

In addition to the above, there is a need for Christian leaders to pray for God to raise up others who will help them in the work of Christian environmentalism. Jesus is noted in the Bible to have commanded his disciple to pray to the Lord to send workers into His harvest. This shows that leaders have to be prayed for even for God's environmental agenda. Churches and ministries

¹⁴ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership*.

¹⁵ Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders*, p.57.

need to go before the Lord in prayer, begging Him for workers/leaders.¹⁶ Church leaders are, therefore, encouraged to pray for leaders for God's environmental agenda and their congregations should be encouraged to do so as well in their personal prayers and in group meetings.

Statement of Beliefs on Nature

As Christian leaders begin to play an active role in encouraging biblical environmentalism, it will be very important to develop a statement of belief on nature. This statement of beliefs on nature can be given to every congregant or follower and can be placed on church or ministry information boards or websites to ensure that everyone knows what the Bible says about nature. This will help put into perspective the Christian environmental stewardship mandate in the face of the philosophies of non-Christian movements that people hear all the time. The voices of secular movements have been too loud and it is time to correct what they have been teaching people for too long and take people back to biblical truth. A statement of belief on nature will, therefore, provide the doctrinal grounding that is needed. In his book, *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demonic Activity*, Bubeck emphasizes the place of objective doctrine by stating that Satan backs off where the truth of God's word is known and proclaimed because it is the greatest key in the warfare against Satan.¹⁷ This begins by Christians understanding that caring for the earth is an important part of what it means to be Christian and is part of the identity of Christians¹⁸ as creatures made in the image of a God who cares for nature. Christian leaders, therefore, have to develop their ministries' statement of belief on nature to

¹⁶ Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are*, (Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books 2009),136.

¹⁷ Mark Bubeck, *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demonic Activity*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Bible Institute, 1975), 94.

¹⁸Walter Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, 16.

ensure that they have an easy reference from which to begin their work. This is especially critical given that right believing is what leads to right behavior. If the focus is only on performance, then it will be a works-based philosophy. However, for Christians it is important to believe right in order for works of righteousness to begin to manifest.

There are important biblical aspects of God and mankind's relationship with nature that should be a part of any statement of beliefs on nature that any Christian church or ministry will have. These include an acknowledgement that God created nature and delights in it, that He maintains it as an ever-present landlord not an absentee one.¹⁹ Perhaps the most concise summary of the essential elements of a statement of beliefs on nature were put forward by Bergstrom. He states that the Christian view of the environment and the biblical stewardship mandate that flows from it, are to be understood based on three principles namely the Principle of Creation Value, the Principle of Sustained Order and Purpose and, the Principle of Universal Corruption and Redemption, which form the foundation of a Christian environmental ethic.²⁰ These principles were explained earlier in Chapter 2 and will be used as checklist for the recommended statement of beliefs on nature that each ministry or church has to develop. As noted earlier in this thesis project, the principle of creation value acknowledges that God is the Creator of nature and He values it. The principle of sustained order and purpose acknowledges that God sustains nature and has a purpose for it. Finally, the principle of universal corruption and redemption speaks of how mankind and nature were corrupted as a result of the fall and God's ultimate plan in redemption is the redemption of both mankind and nature. These three

¹⁹ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

²⁰ John C. Bergstrom, "Principles of a Christian Environmental Ethic: With Applications to Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment".

principles should be adopted in the statement of belief on nature even though they may not necessarily be named as such. It will suffice to acknowledge that God is the Creator of nature and He values it, that God sustains nature and has a purpose for it, and that mankind and nature were both corrupted as a result of the fall and God's redemption is for both. This will then form a basis for the stewardship mandate of the church. By understanding the full picture of God's purpose with regard for nature, mankind who has been elevated above nature as a creature in the image of God,²¹ will be able to know how to effectively steward nature that has been placed under his charge.

It should also be noted in the statement of beliefs that mankind possess a dual relationship with nature that underlines his stewardship position. Human beings are biophysical beings, which are part of the natural world that is their environment because they are co-creatures with nature. However, as the image of God²², they are personally related to the Creator.²³ It is that elevation above nature as creatures made in the image of God that comes with a responsibility to Him to rule²⁴ the earth justly for His glory.²⁵ Therefore, the human race can use nature for its own purposes with the understanding that nature belongs to Him and people are His caretakers. Jesus taught His disciples that He did not come to be served but to serve.²⁶ Again the Bible states that Jesus emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant.²⁷ Therefore, while

²¹ Genesis 1:27-28(NASB).

²² Genesis 1:27(NASB).

²³ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

²⁴ Genesis 1:28(NASB).

²⁵ D.C Jones, "Theology of Nature," 817.

²⁶ Mark 10:45(NASB).

²⁷ Phil. 2:5-8 (NASB).

mankind is not subservient to nature, he can serve nature like Christ came to save and serve man though He is man's King. It is important to understand that the words "subdue" and "dominion" in Genesis 1:28 refer to a stewardship or caretaker role that God has given to mankind over nature as only God has absolute authority over nature.²⁸ The Scriptures says that it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.²⁹ Therefore human beings have to be trustworthy stewards of God's earth and not waste and destroy the earth's resources for they belong to God but care for it in the same way that God put Adam in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.³⁰

Additionally, the statement of beliefs on nature has to detail the blessings and punishment that come with for obedience or disobedience, respectively. This is because the Bible warns that the time will come for judging and destroying those who destroy the earth.³¹ If humankind does not keep, preserve and nurture the earth as mandated by God, they shall be found guilty for destroying the earth and be liable for God's judgment. Those who are good servants shall receive the blessings that are due to good stewards.³²

In the statement of beliefs on nature, it is also important to include the fact that nature should not be worshipped because biblical environmentalism is theocentric.³³ A theologically sound environmental doctrine acknowledges that God alone is to be served and worshiped and

²⁸ Dan Story, *Should Christians Be Environmentalists?*

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:2(NASB).

³⁰ Genesis 2:15(NASB).

³¹ Revelation 11:18(NASB).

³² Ibid.

³³ Dale and Sandy Larsen, *While Creation Waits*.

care for the environment should derive from a relationship with God.³⁴ This is because environmental stewardship is about obeying God and being faithful to His commission to care for the earth.³⁵

Environmental Stewardship Education

The results of the survey for this thesis project proved that Christian leaders are guilty of not teaching and preaching to their congregants and followers about biblical environmental protection and stewardship. It is clear that Christians do not understand the importance of biblical environmental stewardship nor do they know that there are benefits to be derived from obeying God. The environmental inaction on the part of many Christians shows that Christians either do not know, or at least do not obey the Scriptures in this regard. This situation has to be corrected because the Bible says that people perish for lack of knowledge.³⁶ It is therefore recommended that Christian leaders schedule teaching and preaching on environmental stewardship based on the Bible and guided by their statement of beliefs on nature. The leader of any Christian church or ministry has the responsibility to lead this environmental protection and stewardship education effort or to find a qualified leader who can do so. This will help the church's environmental stewardship program.

From the evaluation of the knowledge and teaching/preaching gaps inquired on by the survey, it is recommended that each church or Christian ministry develops a concise environmental stewardship education program with the Pastor or a chosen leader leading the environmental stewardship education initiative. The program adopted has to acknowledge that

³⁴ Dan Story, 2236-2239, Kindle.

³⁵ Ibid., 2096-2098, Kindle.

³⁶ Hosea 4:6(NASB).

God is the creator and owner of all things³⁷ and mankind is a steward.³⁸ It is believed that the preaching and teaching of biblical environmentalism will be better off if a planned. A consistent program of environmental stewardship education can be developed to teach the basic principles of Christian environmental management and protection to Church and Christian ministry members. This is very important, given the fact that Christianity is about right believing which ultimately leads to positive action. If congregants and followers in Christian ministries are taught right about what the Bible teaches on environmental stewardship, it will be easy for them to grow in action and zeal in this area. In doing this, congregants and followers themselves will be blessed as they obey God in their environmental activism.

A Bible study curriculum has to be developed in line with the recommendations of the survey. This will help to cover the knowledge and teaching gaps by going deep into the matter of biblical environmentalism during Bible study sessions. Bible study teachings on environmental stewardship can be done at any time throughout the year. However, a structured pulpit schedule has to be developed to take care of the hesitancy to let environmentalism be the main message preached from the pulpit, as revealed by the survey results. Christian leaders can take into account the lessons learnt by Willis Jenkins in Uganda. In addressing the dilemma of making sustainable planning, housing, energy use and climate change intelligible to Christian communities Willis Jenkins speaks of a time he was in Uganda when he realized that churches there theologically mobilize community responses to social problems³⁹ by centering their parish committees on revivalist prayer groups, and committees that motivate community action on issues such as protection of water sources, community land use and tree planting initiatives. As

³⁷ Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1(NASB).

³⁸ Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; and Luke 12:48(NASB).

³⁹ Walter Jenkins. *Ecologies of Grace*, 5.

the spiritual leader led the way and gave pulpit exhortations on environmental protection, these issues become a part of the community's preaching, prayers and worship and practice.⁴⁰ Jenkins notes that sermons on environmental protection in Uganda led to altar calls and ecstatic worship because people understood the environmental dimension of salvation.⁴¹ Based on the above, it is recommended that Christian leaders in developed nations learn from the lessons learnt by Jenkins in Uganda and begin to link environmental protection to the story of Jesus and his redemptive work in both mankind and nature that shall be fully realized in eschatology. It is possible that sermons on the environment can lead to altar calls where people are saved and renewed.

In addition to the sermons and Bible study that will take place at scheduled times during the year, it is also recommended that churches and Christian ministries develop a planned and structured environmental stewardship program in one month of the year as is often done with giving and financial stewardship. This program has to be planned for in advance and the church or ministry has to develop a theme for the month that is consistent with the church or ministry's statement of beliefs on nature. During this month, in all the church or ministry's programs, Christian leaders should keep repeating environmental stewardship information over and over as this is necessary in environmental stewardship education. Even, the Christian leader's sermons have to all be about environmental stewardship during this month. A detailed Bible Study series on biblical environmental protection and stewardship can be taught to members during this month based on detailed curriculum and the ministry's statement of beliefs on nature. It is also recommended, during this month, that the church or ministry evaluates the kind of biblical environmental stewardship material it has and if it does not have any, it has to develop and order

⁴⁰ Walter Jenkins. *Ecologies of Grace*, 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

such material for distribution. This material and the statement of beliefs on nature have to be given out to everyone to ensure knowledge and direct mail and promotion posters all over the ministry building can be used to communicate the environmental stewardship message. Special emphasis will be placed on biblical environmentalism during environmental stewardship month.

The biblical teaching and preaching can be reinforced by testimonies from people who have been fulfilled spiritually by engaging in an environmental stewardship exercise. An environmental challenge day can also be used to encourage people to engage in Christian environmentalism or participate in an environmental stewardship activity that the church or Christian ministry will be engaging in. A special offering collection can be made during environmental stewardship month and this money can be used for church/ministry internal environmental programs, community drives or environmental missions. Dedicating one month per year to detailed teaching, preaching, testimonies and distributing material on biblical environmental stewardship will be an effective way of teaching environmental stewardship in the church without making it the main focus on the church. All this teaching on Christian environmentalism will have to be done in the context of Christ, who is the center of all existence.⁴²

Programs and activities can also be used during environmental stewardship month to reinforce the teaching on biblical environmental stewardship. These activities may include a banquet with good Christian environmental speakers, a beautiful decorated venue with a nature theme, a catered meal and a fun, informative, and inspirational program. A nature outing or trip can also be used to teach people about the importance of environmental stewardship and protection. In addition to the above a prayer canvas is also another tool that can work during environmental stewardship month. The church or ministry has to train people whom it will send

⁴² Acts 17:28(NASB).

out in teams to visit church members to deliver environmental stewardship brochures, encourage member to make reservations for the stewardship banquet, and take an opportunity for special prayer for the church. These visits can be an opportunity for the church to inquire from members their thoughts on the needs, strengths and weaknesses of the church's environmental stewardship program.

As part of environmental stewardship education, it is also recommended that Christian leaders engage in correcting the misconceptions about the environmental agenda. Secular environmental movements have been teaching people to worship nature and reverence it⁴³ and some within the church have come up with contextual theology to underscore their deep feelings about the environment by developing their own understanding of Scripture and theology.⁴⁴ Materialists on the other hand, have taught people that nature is infinite and that there is no need to protect it. To counter these negative views, Christian leaders have to engage their communities by speaking the truth in public environmental debates, on television and radio, on billboards, on the news, on social media and any platform that they can use to correct the wrongs views on environmentalism. Christian leaders have to take people back to biblical truth and dare to stand for God so that people may know that environmental stewardship is truly a God given mandate if done within the context of biblical understanding.

Local Action

Many of the survey respondents pointed out that leading by example and spearheading community environmental drives are some of the effective ways of leading the way in biblical environmental protection. Based on this, it is recommended that leaders take

⁴³ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*.

⁴⁴ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2 *The Reformation to Present Day*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 520.

action in their communities by encouraging community action and by being exemplary.⁴⁵ These solutions go to the core of resolving the action gaps that were identified by the survey and are very important because the Bible states that, faith without works is dead⁴⁶ and that such dead faith will not profit a man.⁴⁷ Therefore, if Christians are to live to their fullest potential as Christians, they have to act in obedience to the Word of God.

Concerning the matter of leading by example, the Bible encourages believers to remember their leaders who speak the word of God to them and imitate their faith.⁴⁸ Therefore, Christian leaders have to be exemplary. They have to live their lives and lead their ministries in a manner that is worthy of imitation. In fact, Christian leaders have to be the paradigm of what it means to be good environmental stewards in their communities by encouraging and leading their ministries to engage in practical environmental protection measures such as, using energy efficient appliances and compact fluorescents, unplugging appliances when not in use, carpooling, recycling, avoiding littering and pollution, tree planting, combining trips and errands, buying tree-free or recycled toilet paper, eating sustainably grown food, caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors to plug air leaks, using low flow shower heads and choosing reusable items over disposables.⁴⁹ Some of these measures can even be practiced in their personal lives and in their ministries so that when people see them and their ministries engaging in good environmental stewardship, this can encourage them to do the same. This is in line with the Bible, which states that leaders do not have to dominate those in their charge but lead them

⁴⁵ 1 Peter 5:2-4(NASB).

⁴⁶ James 2:26(NASB).

⁴⁷ James 2:14(NASB).

⁴⁸ Hebrews 13:7(NASB).

⁴⁹ Matthew Sleeth, *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*. (White River Jct, Vermont: Chelsea Green, 2006).

by example.⁵⁰

Additionally, Christian leaders can lead by example by giving to Christian environmental organizations in their communities and in so doing encourage their congregant and followers to support the biblical environmental cause. They can also have their churches, organizations or ministries involved in the work of local Christian environmental organizations on a voluntary basis as a way of encouraging others in the community to do likewise. They can even be involved in fundraising, speaking or pamphlet distribution for such Christian environmental organizations so their communities can see them leading the way and then follow in their footsteps. When Christian leaders do this, their actions speak to others about the importance of environmental stewardship and entire communities can be influenced to follow as they lead the way. This result can be expected because people generally view Christian leaders as people of integrity who have been called by God to lead and speak on His behalf. This make it possible for them to invest their power into their followers to empower them so that the their burden for the theocentric environmental protection can be reproduced in others by their transformational leadership as they communicate a compelling vision and bring about the highest order of change like what Jesus did.⁵¹

Furthermore, Christian leaders can lead by example in the environmental movement in the way they react to opposition. If they do not grow weary in the face of opposition as the Bible mandates⁵² they will begin to reap tangible results and sow steadfastness in the hearts of their followers as they see their leaders in action. They have to exercise due diligence and

⁵⁰ 1 Peter 5:3(NASB).

⁵¹ Leighton Ford, 72-77, Kindle.

⁵² Galatians 6:9(NASB).

perseverance as well as remain courageous even in tough times as they work to fulfill God's environmental mandate. This will ensure that those whom they lead will be able to stand and persevere in the environmental agenda even in the face of opposition based on their example. In doing this, they can exhort their followers and congregants to be imitators of them as they are imitators of Christ⁵³ who persevered and obeyed even unto death.

In addition to the above, it is recommended that Christian leaders exercise their influence by leading environmental community drives in their communities. These drives can encourage communities to engage in activities that will give glory to God as the environment is taken care of. Such community drives can include activities like picking up litter to clean up the city, planting trees to avoid deforestation, standing up against pollution, pesticide use and excessive paper or plastic use, donating old cell-phones, computers and printers for a good environmental cause or picking one endangered species and do something to save it as a community.⁵⁴ Community residents can be encouraged to plant deciduous trees on the south side of their houses or churches to save on cooling costs.⁵⁵ When Christian leaders begin to influence their communities for action, greater impact will be achieved and much will begin to happen with regard to communities becoming true stewards of their environment. When this begins to happen, glory and honor will be given to God because only reverence for God and His creation will be the source of such a Christian ecological ethic⁵⁶ by Christian leaders and their communities.

Christian leaders should be encouraged in knowing that that there is an unfading crown of

⁵³ 1 Corinthians 11:1(NASB).

⁵⁴ Matthew Sleeth, *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ King-Tak Ip(ed), *Environmental Ethics: Intercultural Perspectives*, 5.

glory to be received for good leadership when Jesus returns.⁵⁷ Therefore, as they lead the way in biblical environmental protection and stewardship they should fix their eyes on the prize⁵⁸ because God's reward is for those who are steadfast in well-doing. The matter of the reward for good leadership is also depicted in Matthew 24:45-47. This shows that Christ will reward good leadership and due diligence in doing what God has commanded.

Environmental Missions and Evangelism

Understanding environmental missions and evangelism begins with grasping the fact that biblical environmentalism is an expression of love for God's people in other parts of the world. When people practice good environmental stewardship in their local communities, they mitigate the harms that can befall other people in other sometimes distant parts of the world who may bear the brunt of their environmental inaction. As noted earlier, the environmental crisis has no borders as most environmental harms have the ability to cross borders in their effects and some natural resources are shared with other countries.⁵⁹ It is, therefore, recommended that Christian leaders encourage people to engage in good environmental stewardship at home to show love for God's people in other parts of the world and this is consistent with the biblical mandate to love.⁶⁰ Christians can also be encouraged to pray for people in other parts of the world whose forests and habitats have been destroyed by other people's environmental abuse.

While local action is good, environmental missions in third world nations are another meaningful way to express love for God's people in other parts of the world. This thesis project, therefore, recommends that Christian leaders and their ministries should engage in third world

⁵⁷ 1 Peter 5:2-4(NASB).

⁵⁸ Philippians 3:14(NASB).

⁵⁹ Ferrante, 480.

⁶⁰ 1 John 4:8, 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3, 13(NASB).

missions in which they motivate tree planting, work to reduce environmental degradation, teach local communities about protection of water sources, sustainable land use strategies and good agricultural practices. This is because environmental protection is dear to the hearts of many third world nations, which are so closely dependent on their environment for their livelihoods. Any effort to engage third world nations with the Gospel will have to include solutions to major issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation.

To put into perspective the issue of environmental missions, Willis Jenkins outlined the story of Scott and Carol Kellerman who went to Uganda as missionaries to the Batwa, anticipating to be engaged in medical missions and gospel friendship with the Batwa people. However, they realized that the most important work in their mission to the Batwa was related to the environment because caring for the Batwa meant caring for the forest they still know as their only home.⁶¹ Jenkins notes that the Kellermans realized that God's special friendship with the Batwa inextricably involved their special connection to that forest, which they called their home.⁶²

From the above, it is recommended that Christian leaders plan the mission outreaches of their churches, especially to third world nations and appeal to these nations with the love of Jesus by showing that God cares for nature and how it relates to their wellbeing. As with the story of the missionaries to the Batwa above, missionaries to third world nations will have to acknowledge that God's special friendship with most third world communities inextricably involves their special relationship with their environment. Missionaries can show people in these parts of the world that God truly loves and cares for them by engaging in mission activities that positively impact the environment.

⁶¹ Walter Jenkins, 6.

⁶² Ibid., 6.

Furthermore, it is recommended that Christian leaders use biblical environmentalism as a tool for witnessing and evangelism either on the mission field or in their home nations. This will enable them to win secular environmentalist to Christ by caring about what they care about. biblical environmentalism and specifically the fact that God cares about the environment He created can be used as a point of contact to make people know about God. The apostle Paul, who is one of the great biblical leaders, used God's earth-keeping and management as a point of contact in spreading the Gospel and stated that God maintains nature and allows it to be blessing to mankind as a witness of His love.⁶³ In doing this, the apostle Paul was able to use earth-keeping as an evangelistic point of contact to ensure that many were brought to the life-saving knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ. Even Jesus in Luke 6:26-30 tells humanity of God's love by stating that if God could take care of the birds of the air and the flowers, then He surely would care much more for human beings who are made in His image. Therefore, the environmental agenda should be used as a point of contact for evangelism by Christian leaders and those they train and mentor for leadership. If Christian leader do this, they will be able to reap much harvest for the kingdom of God as they engage local and foreign communities with the message of God's love for mankind and nature.

Lobbying Government

To be effective as leaders in Christian environmental management, Christian leaders have to lobby government and influence change at state and national levels. This is because it is the essence of true democracy for people to be able to stand up for what they believe. In a democratic nation like America, it is expected that Christian leaders will be able to do this. This is not to encourage Christian leaders to be deeply involved in politics or to influence elections as

⁶³ Acts 14:17(NASB).

this is prohibited by the Internal Revenue Code for charitable organizations that are registered under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.⁶⁴ It is only an exhortation to be involved in influencing state and national policies on things that affect God's people and His environment. When things are not well with the environment, it is also not well with humanity because of the dependency that exists between mankind and nature, with humans depending on the environment for sustenance and environment depending on humanity for care and protection.

While churches and other organizations registered under section 501(c)(3) on the Internal Revenue Code can lobby, this Code restricts these tax-exempt organizations (churches included) from engaging in substantial lobbying.⁶⁵ Although it is difficult to specifically define substantial lobbying,⁶⁶ churches and other tax exempt Christian organizations are encouraged to lobby and stand up for biblical environmental protection to the extent that it is allowable for them to do so. This is because when people become involved in protecting the environment, it gives glory to God and it is part of the mission. Therefore, in the same way that churches and other religious groups have lobbied against abortion and other human ills like the slave trade, they can still stand up for the biblical mandate to protect and nurture the environment and see policies change to support this. Fear of God has to develop among Christian leaders to encourage them to unite, overlook their differences and stand united for the sake of God's environment over which they are stewards. If they do this, their voices will be heard and true environmental stewardship can begin to manifest in the policies and laws of the United States of America.

⁶⁴ <http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/policysocial-context/16636-restrictions-on-lobbying-by-exempt-organizations-how-much-advocacy-is-too-much.html>.

⁶⁵ Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

⁶⁶ <http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Charitable-Organizations>

Leadership Development

The problem of hesitancy in leadership in environmental issues among Christian leaders and the resultant environmental inaction among Christians reveals that there is something missing in the way Christian leaders are developed. The results of the thesis project survey showed that Christian leaders are not doing much to motivate people to engage in biblical environmentalism. Something has to change to ensure that Christian leaders fear God enough to inspire action that reveals obedience to His word. Such change has to begin in the seminaries where they are trained for ministry and in the internal leadership development programs of the ministries that train them.

Against the above background, it is recommended that all Christian seminaries include course on biblical environmentalism or environmental ethics. This is critically important in the face of climate change, pollution, desertification and other environmental ills that this world faces today. It is also very important given that God places value on nature as his creation. God created nature,⁶⁷ sustains it,⁶⁸ reveals His glory in it⁶⁹ and will redeem it together with mankind in eschatology.⁷⁰ It is therefore recommended that all leaders be trained to heed God's Word, even on issues such as environmental stewardship that a lot of Christian leaders have been hesitant to engage in. Both Christian seminaries and ministry leadership development programs have to include teachings on what the Bible says about environmental stewardship. Qualified Christian educators will have to be sought by Christian schools/seminaries to teach Christian leaders about Christian environmental stewardship to ensure that they are ready for action once

⁶⁷ Genesis 1:1(NASB).

⁶⁸ Hebrews 1:3; Psalm 104: 24,27,30(NASB).

⁶⁹ Romans 1:20(NASB).

⁷⁰ Romans 8:18-25(NASB).

they begin ministry. The same requirement has to be placed on Churches and Christian ministries to ensure that there is a consciousness about the biblical mandate to steward the environment. If a Christian leader does not know about Christian environmentalism, it would be very hard for them to teach their followers anything about it. This is because the leader is a moral guide and therefore, they have to know and based on that knowledge, he or she is expected to lead, guide and advice.⁷¹ In the Bible, Jesus says that those who love Him will keep His commands⁷² However, it is impossible for leaders to keep God's environmental mandate and let alone teach it to others if they do not know it.

There has also been an emphasis in recent years that Christian leadership has to be focused on the Great Commission and making disciples of all nations.⁷³ While this is true this does not exclude environmentalism in the Christian leadership mandate. It is therefore recommended that Christian leadership development be wholesome, including important issues such as biblical environmental protection and stewardship. Ephesians 4:11-15 mandates Christian leaders to prepare, guide and lead God's people towards works of Christian service and this includes service to God in relationship to the environment as He mandates in His Word.

It is also recommended that Christian leaders who engage in biblical environmental stewardship always seek to reproduce themselves in the in-house leaders they train. This will ensure that the baton of Christian environmentalism is passed on from generation to generation as more and more leaders are trained. In this regard Neil Cole states that the greatest leaders are, therefore, not those who win the most followers but those who produce other leaders, who will

⁷¹ Rebekah Miles, 4.

⁷² John 14:15(NASB).

⁷³ Rodney Dempsey, "Healthy Church Systems." Lecture Notes, (LBTS, Lynchburg, VA).

also be faithful, fruitful and finish well.⁷⁴ The priorities of the ministry have to reflect what is valuable in God's kingdom.⁷⁵ Therefore, the job of the leader in discipleship is to train God's people to do the work⁷⁶ after they become saved. Each church will have to develop a system that rewards and produces leaders. The process will begin by winning people to Christ, winning people to oneself through relationship building as a leader and winning them to the cause, which is the overall mission to make disciples.⁷⁷ At this point it is important to note that the mission of the Christian church has to focus on winning people to Jesus⁷⁸ and then discipling people to serve Jesus in the salvation of more souls and in matters that are important to him like environmental stewardship.

Jon and Dave Ferguson suggest small groups as the best place to reproduce leaders as members of the group can take leadership risks, receive honest feedback, and get understanding of important biblical concepts.⁷⁹ Based on this, it is recommended that each ministry develops the small group model because small groups are a great model for reproducing leaders and teaching them details about things like environmental management in an environment where they can take leadership risks, receive honest feedback, and get understanding. There are very simple requirements for a group namely: the leader, the host, the site, the vision, the strategy and prayer. Leaders developed in the small groups will then be deployed to begin new groups that teach and

⁷⁴Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009).

⁷⁵ Dave and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start A Missional Church Movement*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010).

⁷⁶ Ephesians 4:11-12(NASB).

⁷⁷ Acts 1:8(NASB).

⁷⁸ Rodney Dempsey, "Healthy Church Systems." Lecture Notes, (LBTS, Lynchburg, VA).

⁷⁹ Dave and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential*.

bring clarity on the fact that the full picture of God's redemption includes biblical environmental stewardship and the redemption of nature. This can become a movement that will enhance the kingdom of God⁸⁰ and produce practical action that protects the environment among Christians.

Finally, leadership conferences and seminars on biblical environmental protection can be a way of continuous development even after the leaders begin their ministries. The church growth movement⁸¹ has been very successful in recent years and it is hoped that a like movement can be developed among evangelical Christians to ensure that Christian leaders can help each other and propel each other to action in environmental stewardship. Through this movement, relationships can be built and Christian leaders can establish accountability to one another to produce results that reveal obedience to God's environmental mandate and save the world from environmental degradation. A holistic learning system can be adopted that provides knowledge and practice as mentor walks alongside mentees⁸² in these environmental conferences and movements.

⁸⁰ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering*.

⁸¹ www.churchgrowth.org (Accessed on November 12th, 2013).

⁸² Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership*, Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Books 2009, 208.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

From the results and analysis of the thesis project survey detailed in chapters 3 and 4, it appears that Christian leaders are ready for action to lead their congregants and followers towards true biblical environmental protection. Most leaders who undertook the survey stated that they understood their strategic position that allows them to motivate biblical environmentalism and were ready to move to a place where they will begin to make great influence toward its. The only thing that is left is positive action on the part of Christian leaders to ensure that biblical environmental protection is indeed fanned into flame. Clearly, the strategic position of Christian leaders in the biblical environmental agenda is beyond question and this thesis project proved that fact.

God has given Christian leaders a platform through which they can teach and demonstrate this biblical environmental agenda to their audiences in whatever ministry setting they are in. Christian leaders have to become the mouthpieces of God; who also lead by example from the Bible, preaching and teaching people to be true stewards of God's natural environment. They have to understand that God is the owner and Creator of all things and He has entrusted the earth and its resources to mankind's care. Christian leaders, therefore have to influence Christians through their ministries to act responsibly with nature as good and faithful stewards¹ and avoid the wrath of God.² If humanity does not keep, preserve and nurture the earth as mandated by God, they shall be found guilty for destroying the earth and be liable for God's

¹ Matthew 25:21, 23(NASB).

² Revelation 11:18(NASB).

judgment.³

Seven key recommendations have been provided by this thesis project and the action that leaders need to take can be guided by these recommendations as they move the mandate forward. However, it is important to understand that every society and ministry setting is different. The recommendations of this thesis project are, therefore, not a one size fits all kind of strategy. They are designed for use as guidance for Christian leaders' leadership in biblical environmentalism. Christian leaders will need to use their discretion in how they will apply these recommendations in their current ministry settings, which are different. In addition to the above, the methods that will be used for application of the principles of Bible environmentalism can be different as application is made in societal and ministry settings. However, care has to be made to avoid changing the age old principles of biblical environmentalism that are theocentric in nature; deriving from reverence to God Himself who is the Creator and Owner of the natural environment. Furthermore, care has to also be taken to avoid worshipping nature.⁴ A theologically sound environmental doctrine acknowledges that God alone is to be served and worshiped and care for the environment should derive from a relationship with God.

It is time for action in Christian environmentalism to be manifested. Therefore Christian leaders have to make room in their lives for biblical environmentalism so that when others see them in action they will also follow in their footsteps. Without being overly prescriptive, this means that Christian leaders will have to remove those things that have acted as hindrances and put into practice the agenda of God in biblical environmental stewardship. If it means revisiting Christology or their mission statements, they have to do it, to ensure that they can understand

³ Revelation 11:18(NASB).

⁴ Dale and Sandy Larsen, *While Creation Waits*.

that God loves nature and that a true relationship with God will have underpinnings of love for nature.⁵

Mankind as a creature created in the image of God, and especially Christians whose relationship with Jesus is beyond doubt, cannot and should not try to separate themselves from the issue of nature protection. This is because this forms a critical part of what it means to be a Christian and what it means to have a relationship/fellowship with a God, who values nature.

⁵ Walter Jenkins, 16.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY

1. Do you believe that protecting and caring for the natural environment is important?
 Not at all
 Slightly
 Somewhat
 Very
 Extremely

2. Do you believe that taking care of the environment is commanded in Scripture?
 No
 Yes
 Not sure

3. Do Christians have a God given mandate to care for the environment?
 No
 Yes
 Not sure

4. Do you believe that environmental stewardship is beneficial for the world?
 Not at all
 Slightly
 Somewhat
 Very
 Extremely

5. Is biblical environmental stewardship and protection preached and taught at your church or ministry?
 Not at all
 Slightly
 Somewhat
 Always

6. How often do you preach or offer Bible study lessons about biblical environmental protection and stewardship at your church/ministry per year?
 Not at all
 Seldom
 Some times
 Most of the time
 Always

7. Do you believe that Christians have a role to play in addressing the environmental harms, such as global warming, pollution, climate change, land degradation and water shortages, which our world faces today?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
8. Is there a difference between what the Bible teaches about caring for the environment and what secular environmental movements have been teaching?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
9. Do you believe that Christian leaders have a duty to teach the truth about what the Bible says about caring for the environment?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
10. Do you believe that Christian leaders should leave it up to secular groups to lead the way in environmental protection?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
11. Do you think Christians know enough about what the Bible says about environmental protection and stewardship?
- Not at all
 Slightly
 Somewhat
 Very
 Extremely
12. Do you think that Pastors and Christian leaders are talking enough with their congregants and audiences about environmental protection and stewardship?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
13. Can Christian leaders use the pulpit to lead people towards true biblical environmentalism?
- Never
 Only when necessary
 Sometimes
 Always

14. Do you believe it is important for Christian leaders to develop a Bible study curriculum to teach people about what the Bible says about environmental protection?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
15. Do you believe that Christian leaders have engaged in the national environmental debate enough?
- Not at all
 Slightly
 Somewhat
 Very
 Extremely
16. Do you believe that Christian leaders are strategically positioned to lead biblical environmentalism in word and action?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
17. Do you think Christian leaders should lead community drives to encourage environmental protection?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
18. Is it good practical leadership in the environmental agenda for the church to practice recycling, water conservation and other environmental measures and let their communities know that this is what they are doing?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
19. Do you believe that churches and other Christian organizations should lobby the government for environmental protection?
- Not at all
 Slightly
 Only when necessary
 Very Much
 Extremely
20. Does good environmental protection and stewardship amount to obedience to God?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure

21. Is it important for Christians to be good and faithful servants of God by exercising good environmental stewardship?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
22. Does the involvement of Christians in environmental protection show their love for God's people in other parts of the world who may bear the environmental consequences that may result from their inaction?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
23. Is it appropriate for missionaries to third world nations to be involved environmental concerns and spearhead tree planting, suggest ways of dealing with environmental degradation as well as addressing water issues as they try to reach third world nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
24. Do you believe that God will be glorified as Christians all over the world engage in biblical environmentalism as mandated by the Scriptures?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure
25. As a Christian leader are you prepared to stand up and lead the way in true biblical care for the environment?
- No
 Yes
 Not sure

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM

D.Min Thesis

“Leading The Way In Biblical Environmental Protection: The Role of Christian Leaders”

By Rejoice Muwadzuri

Liberty University Seminary and Graduate School

You are invited to be in a research study involving 100 Christian leaders concerning the role of Christian leaders in leading the way towards biblical environmental protection. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a Christian leader in the Southwest region of the United States (Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico). I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Rejoice Muwadzuri, a doctoral student at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to espouse the need for the principles of environmental stewardship to taught and encouraged among Christians through the ministry and influence of Christian leaders. It is the hope of this researcher that, through this study, a framework can be developed for Christian leaders to influence and motivate their congregants and members towards active biblical environmental protection that addresses current environmental threats in a way that is consistent with the Scriptures.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- * Read the survey questions carefully.
- * Fill out the survey to the best of your ability. This survey should only take you about twenty minutes to complete.
- * After completing the survey, send it back within one week of receipt in the self-addressed envelope or via email.

Please be assured that all information obtained on the surveys is for research purposes only. Your responses will be treated with great anonymity and privacy to avoid any harm that might be caused as a result of your participation in this research.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The researcher realizes that no study is without risk. However, pertaining to this study, the risks are very minimal and are no more than the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

The main benefits of participation in this study will be realized as a framework or guide is developed for Christian leaders to motivate and lead their congregants and followers to take their place in active biblical environmentalism that will protect our natural environmental resources and address current environmental threats, such as global warming, that the world faces today.

Compensation:

There will be no payment for participation for participation in this study. Your voluntary participation is appreciated.

Confidentiality:

Please be assured that all information obtained on the surveys is for educational research purposes only and will aid the completion of a thesis project at Liberty University. Your responses will be treated with great anonymity and confidentiality to protect your privacy and to avoid any harm that might be caused as a result of your participation in this research. The records of this study will be kept private and only the researcher will have access to the records. The completed survey and interview forms will be destroyed when all the data is compiled after three years. In any sort of report that might be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is REJOICE MUWADZURI. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at: rmuwadzuri@yahoo.co.uk . You may also contact Dr. Charlie Davidson, Faculty Advisor at: cdauidson@liberty.edu .

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

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The Graduate School at Liberty University

March 29, 2013

IRB Exemption 1579.032913: Leading the Way in biblical Environmental Protection: The Role of Christian Leaders

Dear Rejoice,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
 - (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
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