

The Creation Mandate

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And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

When God created our first parents he gave them a task. They, and all mankind after them, were to be fruitful and multiply and to exercise dominion over this newly created world. This is commonly called the Creation (or Cultural) Mandate. And even though Adam and Eve sinned, thereby introducing corruption and decay into all the workings of the world, this command is reaffirmed after the Fall (Genesis 3:16-19). We are still obligated by that mandate today.

There are three elements to this mandate. First, God pronounces his blessing, communicating his gracious good will toward humanity and, through it, toward the whole of creation. A three-fold task then flows from this initial blessing: we might label them Worship, Wedlock, and Work. (And we must remember the order: God's grace always precedes our obligations.) 1) The first calling is implied, but it's the all-important response that's required to God's blessing. All people are obligated to worship their Maker, living under his good and loving rule. This is demonstrated in Adam and Eve's walking with God in the garden, and in our subsequent call to glorify God in all we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). 2) Humanity is also told to start families and to bear children, filling the whole earth with worshipers of the one true God. 3) And finally, we are told to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over it. This work is to bring out the full potential of all that God has created and called very good. So as mankind has grown and filled the earth, we have developed civilizations and technologies, science and art. Indeed, just as Adam *cultivated* the soil in the Garden of Eden, we still create *culture* in every area of life.

After the fall into sin, all of life is filled with frustration and heartache. This is not the way the world is supposed to be. And so we are called, as those belonging to God the Creator/Redeemer, to extend redemption and restoration "far as the curse is found." In spite of the sin and sorrow we see all around us, we still affirm with David that "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). Once we are placed into right relationship with God through Christ, we get busy with the work of the Creation Mandate. If Christ is indeed Lord over all of life, it follows that his disciples (us) will be found in every area of life. We will work hard to apply God's Word to everything—from architecture and business to yard sales and zoology—in order to bring out the full potential of God's good creation and therefore to better glorify him. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch pastor-theologian and former Prime Minister of The Netherlands, famously said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'" Christ died not just to save our souls—as glorious as that is—but to redeem and restore the whole of his good creation. God did not make junk at the creation, and despite the fall he does not junk what he has made. Rather, he does the self-sacrificial work of restoring every aspect of existence, all to the praise of his glorious name. God's grace does not destroy nature, but rather it redeems and restores it. And we are privileged to join him in that work.