

He saw it was **GOOD**

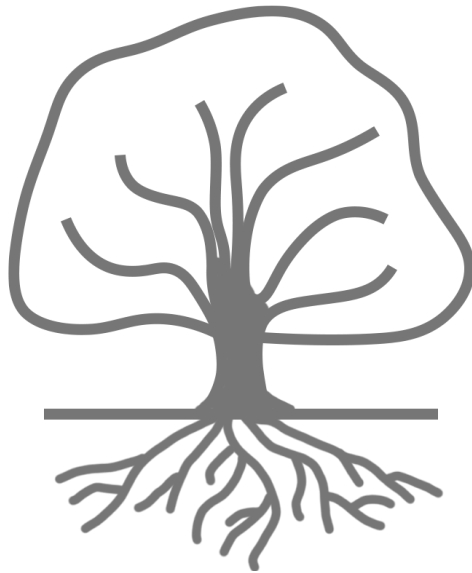
AN MAF BIBLE STUDY

PARTICIPANT'S WORKBOOK



SESSION 3

Thriving In God's World



Introduction

In the first video, MAF staff presenters Sheonagh and Matt will introduce the topic of Planet and how MAF Technologies PNG is taking steps to ensure sustainable power for remote villages. Make any notes in the provided box below.

Scripture

'When I consider Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of Your hands; You put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!'

Psalm 8:3-9 (NIV)

We will be returning to this verse later in the study.

The SDGs and Planet

In this next video, our presenters will walk you through the Sustainable Development goal of helping the 'Planet' — our next 'P'.

As you watch the video, make any notes you wish to in the space below. Jot down any facts and statistics that you will find helpful to ponder and pray over in the future.



Devotion

Written by Adam Pope

We read in the Bible's account of creation that God set man above all the creatures of the earth. On day six, God made humans in His image and gave them authority to 'Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, and over every living creature that moves on the ground' (**Genesis 1:28**). That's a huge responsibility!

Over the centuries, many have used this command to legitimise the control and suppression of the planet. Many have sought to dominate and use God's creation for their own ends.

In the process of social 'progress' and economic growth, we have over-consumed the resources placed in our hands, industrialised the farming of livestock for food, destroyed habitats, and poisoned the environment we all share.

The terms 'rule' and 'subdue' have been translated as 'dominate' and 'conquer'. Today, we live with the consequences of this behaviour.

So, what should our attitude be to the role God has given us regarding His creation? If we want to know God's perspective on what it means to rule, what better place to start than the kings He chose to rule His people? His directions to them should provide an insight into our own responsibilities.

Let's take King Solomon as an example. In **Psalms 72:8-11**, the Psalmist says, 'May he rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. May the desert tribes bow before him and his enemies lick the dust.

'May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts. May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.'

He is clearly the boss!

Why are the kings bowing down to him? Where does his authority come from? Is it hard discipline, strict control and might? No. In **Psalms 72:12-14** we read, 'For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.'

Here is a ruler whose authority comes from his care and compassion, and who seeks to nourish and tend. It is this that gives him the authority to rule.

God calls us to 'act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [our] God' (**Micah 6:8**). But I wonder if this is really humankind's attitude to God's creation?

Look at Jesus. He declared that, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (**Matthew 28:18**). Did He use that to bring about His Kingdom by force? Did He seek to use others and control people to push His agenda?

No. He tended His flock, healed and fed them, taught and encouraged them. His rule was gentle, kind and compassionate.

As our planet groans under the weight of our excess, we are being challenged to rethink our shared life on the planet. Studies have revealed the interconnectedness of all living things, from fungi to trees, mammals to insects, reefs to humans. We need one another.

We have been given the gift of ruling over all living things, but in a way that protects, cares and nourishes *all* forms of life. By doing so, it enables us to thrive.

But if we destroy other parts of God's creation, then not only are we neglecting His provision and handiwork, but we're also damaging ourselves in the process.

I found this biblical paraphrase helpful for understanding our God-given role to tend to the needs of creation. It was written by Christopher Brown:

'Rule with care and fairness over the natural world, over the myriads of My beautiful creatures — from tropical fish to soaring eagles to dogs and cats — every creature that is a part of this living world.'

Review

When you hear God's command to rule over creation, how does that make you feel?

Consider **Matthew 28:18** and Jesus' statement that all authority has been given to Him. From what you know about Jesus' character, in what ways does the example of how Jesus exercised *His* authority differ from those who are in positions of authority in the world today?

Is there anything you can learn from this which will impact your role as ruler over the part of God's creation in which He has placed you?

MAF Story

Your group leader will show you the next video, introduced by your presenters Matt and Sheongh, which will show you a recent solar installation from MAF Technologies PNG.

Reflection

Think of people you've known who have had authority over you. This could be at work, in church, at school or in your family. How did they express that authority? What positive influences did that expression of authority have on you? What negative influences did these expressions of authority have on you?

Consider the statistics below which relate to sustainable consumption. When we read these figures about 'waste', what do they tell us about how our lifestyles, demands and 'needs' regarding food and consumables aren't necessarily aligned in ways that promote sustainability? What can we learn from this?

- » Between the year 2000 and 2017, the global material footprint per capita rose by almost 40% — from 8.8 metric tons to 12.2 metric tons.
- » As of 2016, almost 14% of food produced globally was lost before reaching the retail sector.
- » In 2019, the amount of electronic waste (e-waste) generated was 7.3kg per capita, of which less than 20% was said to be managed in an environmentally sustainable manner. The annual rate of growth in e-waste recycling over the past decade was 0.05kg per capita, which will need to increase more than tenfold if all e-waste is to be recycled by 2030.

Repentance

Depending on how your leader is running your course, you can either ponder these questions during the study, or use them in a personal time of reflection on your own after the study is over.

Re-read **Psalm 8:3-9** (Scripture section of this workbook)

- Are there times when you haven't lived up to the responsibility God has given you to be a steward of His creation? We all are guilty in some part of mistreating the planet, whether knowingly or unintentionally, through the way in which society expects us to consume goods and materials.
- Take time to reflect on this, then spend time with God in prayer, asking Him to make you aware of your behaviour and actions. Then consider some different choices you could make.

Prayer

- Pray that God will grant us the grace to grow deeper in our respect and care for His creation. Pray too that we will take more time to reflect on our responsibility as stewards of planet earth.
- Pray for an end to the unsustainable use of the planet's resources. May the fruits of creation be shared equally among all people, wherever they live, and no matter how isolated or remote they may be.
- Pray for the leaders and decision makers in governments around the world. May they uphold the commitments made in the 2015 Paris Agreement and the 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact regarding climate action.
- Pray that, through the continued smart use of technology, MAF Technologies PNG will continue to find sustainable solutions for the energy needs of those we serve in Papua New Guinea. Pray too that, through MAF's flights around the world, we will continue to enable other organisations to deliver their own vital work in helping to promote sustainable production and consumption, along with effective climate action.

Jot down any other areas you would like to pray for — for example, prayers for the state of the world, the work of MAF or the Sustainable Development Agenda.



After today's study, please consider becoming part of a *For the Sake of the World* prayer group. To find out more, or to set up your own group, please visit <http://forthesakeoftheworld.com>

Response

To close this third study, you will hear again from presenters Sheonagh and Matt. They will challenge you to think about what practical actions you could commit to as a take-away from this session.

- Think about your impact on God's creation. What you eat or wear, how you travel or where you purchase goods. What changes can you make to better protect and care for the planet and the creatures inhabiting it?
- How can you share with other Christians our calling to be 'creation caretakers'?



Find out more

We have lots of other examples of how MAF helps to advance the sustainable development agenda through our work and ministry, and also through partnering with other organisations seeking to reach the most isolated communities on earth.

If you would like to continue your journey in this session of the Bible Study and find out more, please visit **www.maf-uk.org/findoutmore** and we'll introduce you to some more stories from where MAF serves around the world.

MAF Discovery Air Pass

Why not continue on your journey with MAF and get your free MAF boarding pass and join us on a journey of discovery to visit places rarely featured in travel brochures, and to meet people living far from the tourist trail. Sign up for our Discovery Air Pass journey and see the world from a unique perspective.

'Fly' with MAF from country to country and find out what it's like to live, work and serve in some of the most isolated places on earth. Every couple of months, you will receive inspiration by post or email: updates from our pilots, real-life stories, fascinating facts and opportunities to support our work. Check in at **www.maf-uk.org/discover-now**