

Trends and interventions within agriculture worldwide

Opinion

Agriculture is the science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products.

This God-given and foundational stewardship of God's land is in a state of growing concern in the world. Much of it is degrading and eroding away. The scientists are telling us that the increasing emission of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere is resulting in the "Greenhouse Gas Effect", which in turn is the chief cause of the Global Warming/Climate Changes crisis.

I was asked to open and close an international university conference in India, during which I listened to thirty scientific papers on Climate Change and its effect on the World Food Supply Situation. In the space of thirty days, I was asked to attend two other conferences on the same subject, one international conference at the World Agroforestry Centre in Nairobi, and one in Harare. When I receive a message repeated to me three times in rapid succession, I begin to realize that the Lord is trying to tell me something.

Upon meditating on this information before the Lord, I realized that we cannot continue to decimate the beautiful forests that He has given us. He has designed each tree to have a huge surface area of leaves, all covered with little apertures called stomata, which take in the harmful gases from the atmosphere, chiefly carbon dioxide, sequestering the carbon back into the soil, and releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. We are replacing this leaf area at a fraction of the pace that we are destroying it, and consequently the noxious gas buildup is running away from us, and the global warming continues to increase.

The upshot of this calamity is that we are now realizing that we cannot cut down too many more forests, which means that we have less arable land left in the world, than we once thought we had. By 2050, the world population is projected to exceed nine billion people, and we are discovering that there will not enough land, on which to grow enough food to feed that number of people. As each nation realizes this, they start to identify where the remaining arable land is in the world. The last substantial block of unopened arable land is in Sub-Saharan Africa, where in the nations just to the North of Zimbabwe, 90% of the arable land is still untouched, whereas in most other nations of the world it is almost fully subscribed to urban and industrial, and agricultural development.

The looming world food shortage will become a drama of life and death. I believe that this crisis is heightening the self-preservation instincts of the nations, which in turn exacerbates the inherent selfish nature of man. In Africa we are already seeing that some outside nations are trying to get access to this last block of arable land. Brazil with its own huge land resource has recently purchased six million hectares in Northern Mozambique, because they don't want to remove any more of their forests.

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Sadly, in many cases, the current modus operandi by foreign Governments to achieve this access is to bribe the incumbents of power in various ways, who in turn try and remain in power by ensuring that the majority of their people remain in relative poverty and dependence on them for their survival. A few people will become very wealthy and the great majority will become even poorer and hungrier.

India will have the greatest pressure to feed its population of 1,3 billion people from a land mass one eighth of the size of Africa, who has one billion people. China has a similar problem, and probably more seriously the Islamic block, who mostly live in the dry regions of the Middle East and North Africa, are trying to breed themselves into the world, and will have more mouths to feed. Even the western nations will begin to starve. When I see the great need of the nations such as China and the Islamic block and their great wealth and power, how do you push back their invasion of this arable land, which has already begun in earnest? I believe that there is no human plan, nation or army, which can push back this invasion of Africa's resources.

Sadly Africa has been unfaithful with the land God has given them. We have more resources, land, and rainfall and sunlight hours than any other continent, yet we import most of our food, and we have the highest levels of land degradation. When I ran to God to ask Him for His plan to avoid this invasion, he reminded me that according to the parable of the talents, He adds to faithful stewardship, but takes away from unfaithfulness. As a holy just God, He cannot overturn His edicts, and is honour bound to give Africa's arable land away to foreigners, who have been more faithful with their own land. For the last thirty years Foundations for Farming (Fundação para Agricultura in Mozambique) has been dedicated to teaching Africa to be faithful with their land.

The Lord's priority and entrance point

The main mandate that the Lord has given us in Foundations for Farming is to ask the Lord continually to show us His plans and solutions for the poor in whatever situation He reveals by His grace. I believe that when our compassionate God looks down on the earth, the first people He notices are the poor. I don't know about you, but I would like to have the same priorities and entrance points that the Lord has. He shows us in Scripture that some very important time frames of history, have begun with His heart-concern for the poor.

Perhaps the greatest period in the history of the world was the last three and a half years of Jesus' life before He returned to His Father in heaven. When He first began this vital period, He announced His ministry in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth by taking out the scroll and declaring from Isaiah 61 why He had come. He said, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* (Luke 4: 16-30)

Secondly when Barnabas and Paul were ordained by God to take the Gospel into the rest of the world (the beginning of the New Testament era), James, Peter and John in Jerusalem blessed their call and sent them off with only one reminder (a serious priority and mandate) of all that Jesus had taught them, *"All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor...."* (Galatians 2: 10).

A third time the Lord shows us this priority in His heart for the poor happens at the beginning of another great era, the millennium. In Matthew 24, near the end of Jesus time on earth, the disciples asked Him when He will return and what will happen in the end-times. Jesus gives a graphic description of the season of the end and finishes in Matthew 25: 31-46, telling them that one day everyone who has ever lived will be before Him, and He will judge them as to whether they will live with Him forever or depart from Him into hell forever. The single criterion for this great judgment of their lives depended on what He saw that they (we) had done, or not done, for the poor. It was as if Jesus was saying to us, *"Did you ever really know me and know my heart?"*

Jesus the one true foundation

The Lord's prime mandate of Foundations for Farming has been to teach faithfulness with the land, beginning with the poorest and hungriest people on the earth in Southern Africa and Northwards to all the nations of the continent. This vision has been based on the Biblical blueprint for the rebuilding of nations as laid out in Isaiah 58, and on the only true foundation of all things, *"For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Foundations for Farming is built on the Lord Jesus Christ, His Word and His nature and character exemplified by His humility, unselfishness and faithfulness as demonstrated to us in His whole life, and especially at the cross. Trying to apply and teach these foundations of Christ has resulted in great favour from the Lord, and Foundations for Farming has been invited into thirty-two nations in Africa. Antioch-type training and logistical stations are being established in language and culture groups on four of the five continents, South America being the only one waiting in abeyance.

We believe that everything on earth should be built on these foundations, which are the nature and character of Jesus, and should be the entrance point to making disciples of all nations (The Great Commission). Verse 12 of Isaiah 58 states that we, God's people, will be known as the rebuilders of communities and nations if we begin the process with the true fast, which The Lord describes as making a plan for the poor. We praise God that Foundations for Farming has been able to play a small part in demonstrating this principle into many nations.

An urgent prophetic message from the lord

Three years ago I felt the Lord emphatically tell me to seek Him and ask Him what it means to be ready for the return of Jesus. This heralded a season of a new understanding and many calls to the nations.

Over the years of my Christian life, many mentors had advised me not to get too involved with the doctrine of Eschatology, because it is such a controversial subject and it can become a serious distraction from focusing on the foundational Gospel. So I was not predisposed towards this at all, but because of the Lord's injunction, I began a sincere study of this doctrine. Since then I have become more and more convinced that there is no pre-tribulation rapture, and that the faithful remnant of believers will face nearly three and a half years of persecution and tribulation before the rapture, during which time they will be shut out of the world system, and will not be able to buy or sell anything. The pretribulation-rapture position is causing many to be unprepared, unready and apathetic to the return of Jesus. (Perhaps this is a selfish position of *"I won't be here anyway!"*).

In Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Jesus urgently exhorts us a number of times to be ready for these times! I began to understand that to be ready means to be prepared, and that when He says flee, that surely there should be places prepared for the faithful to flee to.

When I asked for further understanding of this, the Lord reminded me that many years ago I had asked Him how to grow plants His way. Later He had shown me in Africa that there are over half a billion people dependant on the land, who are too poor to put on any fertilizer. This made me realize that the poor are in a poverty trap because if they continually remove nutrients from the soil in their grain and produce, and if they and don't replenish those nutrients, the soil composition systematically weakens and food yields continually diminish, until in the long-term, the land becomes a desert.

When I saw this captivity to poverty, I pleaded with the Lord for His solution. The Father then showed me in Mark 6:30-44 how Jesus had fed the 5000 when they were hungry and tired in that distant and desolate place, and how Jesus asked the disciples how many loaves they had. They told Him that they only had five and two fish. Jesus told them to bring them to Him, and then He multiplied them and fed that vast crowd. I felt the Father tell me to do likewise, and to go and find what the people had with and around them. When I started to look, the first thing I saw were the many termite mounds (anthills) dotted throughout the plains of Africa. These mounds have slightly more nutrients than the surrounding soil, and it was like the few loaves and fishes, which He could multiply. We began experimenting with this first intervention in carefully laid out scientific trials. We were astounded at the resulting yields of grain from so little nutrient value. Then we experimented with animal manure and then composting the biomass of the plants around them, and then with vermi-compost that had passed through earthworms.

Now after ten years of diligent long-term trials, we have found that the most efficient nutrients come from specially made compost; made from the materials they have around them. Then we noticed that over this time we were getting very little, if any, pests and diseases. So now we have been able to teach poor farmers how to grow sustainably profitable yields of food with no cash outlay for the purchase of expensive synthetic fertilizers, harmful chemicals, machinery (just using a hoe), no diesel or repairs and maintenance expenses, without

expensive hybrid seed or interest and redemption, all achieved with their own labour.

Their dollar return per dollar invested, in cash terms, is extremely high, whereas a commercial farmer using all the expensive inputs and machinery can barely cover his costs of production. All those expensive inputs and machines require huge amounts of energy to manufacture and operate, all belching out huge amounts of hydrocarbons into our atmosphere. On the other hand, imagine if we could train, place and mobilise the millions of poor people of this world, who have flooded to the cities looking for non-existent jobs, to steward the land God's way, without all these expensive inputs, most of which slowly destroy the bio-life of our soils. We would then be able to begin reversing the destruction of our soils, forests and atmosphere.

But most excitingly these humble folk we have already trained are growing food outside the world system! The Lord reminded us that He chooses the weak and foolish to shame and to confound the strong and wise (1 Corinthians 1: 26-31). I felt very excited when I carefully read verse 28, *"God chose what is low and despised in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are..."*. I felt He was showing us that the poor will not be seen as a threat to the arrogant and proud persecutors in the end-times, and that the enclaves of poor Christians we are teaching in remote places in many nations of the world, will become safe-havens, where the persecuted ones will be able to flee to in the end times.

In Zimbabwe we have seen that it is impossible to change a nation towards Godliness through the secular powers at the top. Conversely we have seen that national change is beginning to happen from the poor folk modelling God's way from the bottom. It is for this reason that in Foundations for Farming we spend only 15% of our training time on a powerful yet simple technology, and management system (which I described last year), and 85% of our time teaching and disciplining the humility, unselfishness and faithfulness of Christ. These qualities are the expression of Christ's love. It is His love and character in us that will change this world, not technology!

The Lord promises in Luke 6: 38, *"For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."* We are seeing the technology, management and character of Jesus permeating upwards in our nation, and we believe it is a model for the world. Jesus refused to go to the rich, the powerful, the sophisticated and the highly educated; instead he chose twelve weak and 'foolish' ones to change the world. I pray that we can dedicate what intellect, education and wealth we have, to share these truths with the poor.

If we are faithful with little, God says He will add to us. He will measure back to us what we measure out. If we in the Body-of-Christ unite and focus on God's plan for the poor, He will begin to change the levels of pride and selfishness and unfaithfulness in the world. The Lord's plan for the poor is also His plan for our safety and preservation in the times to come!

I believe that the full significance of Psalm 41: 1-3 will be measured back to us: *"Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him; the Lord protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health."* I have been told that in the original language, *"Blessed is the one who considers the poor"*, actually means *"Blessed is the one who makes a plan for the poor."*

What amazing promises for the end-time tribulation! (All my own emphases).

The Lord emphatically told me that we are not to start to specifically construct these "safe-havens", as that would begin to preoccupy us and intensify our sense of self-preservation, which in turn would exacerbate our inherent selfishness, which so grieves Him. The selfishness of man is the root cause of every problem and suffering on earth. We are to simply concentrate on making a plan for the poor, and then He will sovereignly create the safe-havens. To beautifully complete the Lord's prophetic message to us in Foundations for Farming, we remember that He shows us that the true fast which He says He will recognise in Isaiah 58, is making a plan for the poor, which He deems as a wonderful demonstration of unselfishness, because the poor are unable to repay us. And the full promise in verse twelve of Isaiah 58 declares that this emulation of Jesus will result in us being called the rebuilders of our nations.

Recently I have been blessed with a confirmation from the Lord as to the nature and design of the "safe-havens". When the tiny sliver of time to flee comes, we are to flee to live amongst the poor and bless, evangelise, and help them to grow food; to join the very ones we will have taught God's plan for the poor. The poor folk will compose the great majority of those who will come to know Jesus in the final great harvest. The very poor in remote places will be the weak and foolish ones, whom the proud sophisticated persecutors will not see (and probably be blinded to). I was so excited when I saw the relevance of James 2: 5-7 tells us, *"Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honourable name by which you were called?"*

It is going to be a time of incredible evangelisation because the poor are the ones, who will believe the Gospel and be saved, (rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom) and who will serve the Lord in the millennium. On the other hand we see in the passage below that the rich were too busy and preoccupied with their own interests to come to the Lord's banquet, so he invited the poor. *"17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'" (Luke 14: 17-24). Surely the poor are the ones we must focus on too, in these end-times (and at all times)! But let us not forget the rich and powerful, who need to find Jesus and repent. *"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* (Matthew 19:24).*

The main persecutors of the faithful remnant will come from amongst the rich and powerful, but I have learnt in my life that when you bless your enemies, the Lord comes and deals with them! We can come against what our enemies are doing in Jesus name, but He wants us to pray a blessing on them as God's children. "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them." (Rom 12: 12-14).

What an incredible joy to think that we will be living, serving and contributing to the needs of the saints. We will have the privilege of all being poor together, depending on our Father in heaven, because we will have been shut out of the world system, owning nothing, just like Jesus!!! Halleluiaah!!! Part of being ready and prepared is to ask the Lord what would we be able to carry with us as we flee, so that we bless and don't burden the poor folk we flee too.

Perhaps the Lord used this illustration below in Matthew 24: 44-47 to show us how we can be like the faithful servant, who will be ready to feed Jesus' persecuted remnant (household) at the proper time, when they have been shut out of the world system, and they cannot buy food, or worldly inputs, with which to grow food, because they have loved Him and been loyal to Him, and have refused to take the mark.

"Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at

the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions." (Matthew 24: 44-47).

Finally the Lord showed me that everything we do, should be based on the foundation of Jesus, and expressly His Word and His Humility, Unselfishness and Faithfulness. These qualities of Jesus will be the best way, in which to live in very close proximity with each other in probably trying circumstances for three and a half years, but free from the corrupting influence of the world and its media. And what better way to prepare the heart of the Bride to meet our Bridegroom when He comes for us! I believe that the Lord wants to preserve a faithful remnant through into the next era, as he did in the days of Noah (Matthew 24: 37). If we are found faithful with the little He has given each of us, He will put us in charge of many things, and help us to emulate His unselfish and compassionate nature and character into the Millennium, and onwards into eternity. (Matthew 25: 21 and Luke 19: 17).

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None.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.