

A Biblical View of Land Reform 2

4. Do you respect the right to own land with title?

A system where land ownership and title is not valued will lead to lawlessness. Biblically we see what I call fluid land ownership.

Lev 25:23-28

'The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. 'Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. 'If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. 'Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. 'But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property.

It's important that we make it easy for people to subdivide land. In scripture you could do so when you needed money. The challenge today is that our legal processes can take very long. To do so you need permission from the ministry of agriculture, you need to involve lawyers and land surveyors and sometimes engineers. The purpose of this is partly to protect the land so that it is still used for agricultural purposes and food security for the nation. God wants to bless us with land but the enemy will have a counterfeit to this. In Canada the land act has a clause that deals with the subdivision of land for relatives.

When you have not paid for something and have title deed for what you possess it affects your sense of dignity and can cause guilt.

5. Are you enlarging your territory and land with integrity?

Land reform endeavours are often characterised by covetousness and greed.

Deut 19:14

"When you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you as your special possession, you must never steal anyone's land by moving the boundary markers your ancestors set up to mark their property.

Micah 2:2

When you want a piece of land, you find a way to seize it. When you want someone's house, you take it by fraud and violence. You cheat a man of his property, stealing his family's inheritance.

When you steal from someone you are also robbing their children of their inheritance.

Job 24:2

Evil people steal land by moving the boundary markers. They steal livestock and put them in their own pastures.

In South Africa, livestock theft has become a big problem. It often goes unreported partly because people are not confident in the police. We see it spoken of in the book of Job when describing characteristics of evil people.

Hos 5:10

Judah's leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water.

6. Do you have a system for land distribution and ownership?

When the children of Israel took over land they had a system. Sadly, a lot of land reform on the continent has been violent, disorganised land grabbing. Title deed of some sort was clear in the Old Testament. The size of land was based on the size of tribe and family. They drew lots probably because it can become very subjective.

Numbers 33:53-54

and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. 'You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give more inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.

Who is controlling the implementation and ultimately benefitting?

If BEE is to do with levelling the playing field, then how do we choose which black people will benefit? There were degrees of discrimination and marginalisation. Some were affected more than others. Let's learn from other countries. In Zimbabwe we saw many wealthy people getting multiple farms based on skin colour and many disenfranchised people remaining with nothing. We saw neo-colonialism and institutional discrimination where people got land but didn't have the means to farm it. Others can then take advantage of this. Farming is very expensive. Key questions must be asked. If I get land am I obligated to do something with it? If you give me land are you obligated to also give me the start-up capital to fund my operations?

Peter Senge said, The problems we face today are the result of yesterday's solutions.

If we punish people because of the families they were born into then are we punishing the children of those who are corrupt today?

As foreigners we experience institutionalised discrimination, for example, access to smart IDs. We need to beware of institutional discrimination around the allocation of land. E.g. Engineering Associations that were historically designed to exclude certain groups. The same thing can occur when it comes to land redistribution where you end up having the nouveau riche black elite. We have seen this with the tenders.

7. Do you have an Abundance or Scarcity Mindset?

Do you believe there is enough for all of us? Are you willing to share? Let's look at the life of Abraham.

Genesis 13:1-18

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. 3 From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier 4 and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord. 5 Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. 7 And quarrelling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarrelling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." 10 Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. 13 Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were

sinning greatly against the Lord. 14 The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring[a] forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." 18 So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.

Here are some sub-questions: Do you see God as your source? Would you rather get what seems to be less than quarrel with others? Do you want to grab for yourself or receive from God? Do you believe that God can prosper you wherever you are? Do you want something that will last forever instead of something that looks nice now but will soon be destroyed?

Empowering yourself should not come from disempowering others. Power has no zero base. Everyone gets to grow and prosper.

You might not want what you get.

Prov 10:22

NIV The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, without painful toil for it.

NLT The blessing of the LORD makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

8. Are you placing the Kingdom first?

Mark 10:29-30

Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Do you want a farm? How closely will you hold it and keep it? Are you willing to let it go for the gospel? Are you willing to share it with others? Are you willing to truly empower your workers that understand farming?

It's interesting how the things mentioned above are the ones that often stop us from obeying the call of God. The Gospel is not just pie in the sky when you die but its also steak on your plate while you wait.