

A Biblical View of Land Reform (Part 3)

9. Are you practising restitution from your heart?

Exodus 22:5-6

"If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. "If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.

Here is a New Testament example: Luke 19:1-9

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." ⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

10. Are you claiming and/or releasing generational blessing?

For the first book I wrote, a man with a printing company offered to print my books for free because of what my father had done for him years ago. Are you going out of your way to bless someone because of their father or grandfather?

2 Sam 9:1-12

David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" ²Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They summoned him to appear before David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "At your service," he replied. ³The king asked, "Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet." ⁴"Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

⁵So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel. ⁶When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "At your service," he replied. ⁷"Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table." ⁸Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

⁹Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's steward, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. ¹⁰You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.) ¹¹Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's[a] table like one of the king's sons. ¹²Mephibosheth had a young son named Mika, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table; he was lame in both feet.

This passage is also very powerful for diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities.

11. Do you believe that GOD can restore what has been taken from you?

Jer 30:17 – 'For I will restore you to health And I will heal you of your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'Because they have called you an outcast, saying: "It is Zion; no one cares for her."' "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob And have compassion on his dwelling places; And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin, And the palace will stand on its rightful place.

12. Are we redressing the situation or taking revenge?

There is a fine line between righting wrongs and taking revenge because of the heart behind it. Healing takes place when the perpetrator voluntarily asks for forgiveness and practices restitution. You can't legislate or institutionalise this. People will always support that which they create. When people are involved in the process they own it. One of the painful elements of BEE today is the fact that you never know whether its just a numbers game or there is a heart change. Be careful of perpetuating the spirit of racism. The enemy tricks us and we open a door to violence and the spirit of death. Empathy gets the privileged people to consider where they would be if they did not have those privileges. Eg If your grandparents could not read where would you be? If they were not allowed to have specific jobs where would you be? What can you do in heart to help? When the privileged and truly thought through this its amazing what can happen. On the other hand, think of the white person who is smart and works hard and gets many distinctions at school (23 years of age) and is trying to apply for a job. How worked part time in a restaurant to supplement his University fees and also took out a loan for his tuition. Ordinarily he would qualify for a bursary and scholarship but there are none available for people of his colour. He has many black friends and has helped them to pass at University. He loves his country and has even got national colours for rowing. Unfortunately he can't get a job because of his colour. Sadly, a lot of people are happy with this scenario because their heart attitude is "Its payback time!" They are not considering the broader ramifications of this scenario. Today there are groups at work saying "we all know that it's a handful of us carrying everyone else." It wasn't just white people saying this? Is he paying for his parents' sins? But what if his parents stood against the apartheid system and were ostracised from their family because of this. How does he process all of this? The result is that many people who love this nation are immigrating. There is a crisis with regards to mentorship. Those that qualify for immigration to other nations are skilled. Any nation that focuses on the past in their primary collective consciousness will regress. Focusing on the negative past causes anger, depression and anxiety. In Zimbabwe's reforms the president has recently said, decision-making based on colour is now outdated. In South Africa we are 24 years post apartheid.

13. Are we empowering the labourers?

Deut 24:19-21

"When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. "When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.

In the bible we see the practice of gleaning. *Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. It is a practice described in the Hebrew Bible that became a legally enforced entitlement of the poor in a number of Christian kingdoms.*

There are many cases where farm labourers would rather work for their previous employers than the new people that take over the land. Are they going to be considered? To what extent is profit sharing taking place for them today? How are we applying principles of faithful stewardship. It's them that have been faithful with the small. How are we to treat the poor and strangers that traverse our farms? There is an obligation we have when we are given stewardship over land.

“Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored.”

6 Guiding Principles

1. Understand that Farming is an Integral part of the economy

As Zimbabwean economist John Robertson puts it in a paper entitled ‘Strengthening Africa’s economic performance’, published in November 2017 by the Brenthurst Foundation, “A key reason for the crash that destroyed Zimbabwe’s manufacturing sector was the government’s failure to recognise that commercial farming was an industry with complex links into every other industrial sector.” We must understand the entire value chain of ploughing equipment, seedlings, transport etc

2. Give land to those that can use it.

Reward those who use it well and allow others to purchase from those who do not steward it well.

3. Help people to purchase land and have title

- This helps them with collateral
- Property right are motivating
- This brings a sense of dignity and responsibility

4. Make room for current landowners to voluntarily part ways with parts of their land.

5. Find ways to keep farming skills in the country and reward those who mentor others.

6. Reward landowners that participate.

Land Stats:

Landowners who are not white own 26.7% of agricultural ground and control more than 46% of SA’s agricultural potential. Twice as much land has been transferred to black entrepreneurs and farmers through ordinary commercial purchases than the state has managed to buy for black owners as part of the land redistribution programme. These stats are in a comprehensive land audit by Agri SA. Published towards the end of 2017 (Thorough with deeds office etc)

Key findings show that eg KZN 45.4% of the agricultural land in terms of surface area is owned by black people. This represents 73.5% of the agricultural potential of the province.

Between 1994 and Dec 2016 5 million hectares of agricultural ground was bought by black people as well as 1,7 mill hectares for other purposes. In the same period government purchased and redistributed only 2.1 million. In addition provincial governments and municipalities bought and redistributed about 600 000 hectares of land. Its interesting to note that black indigenous farmers have been buying land close to where they are originally from.

Agricultural land has reduced by 4% due to mines, extension of municipal boundaries, industry etc

In this 23 yr period R90.3 bn has been spent on land that is now owned by black people. Of this, government bought 2.8 mill hectares for which it paid R20.5 bn. Large areas of this land are today underutilised or fallow. A large portion of the 4 million hectares that government said it redistributed lies in the former homelands.

One wonders how much success government would have achieved had it simply made the R20.5 bn available to prospective black farmers who want to buy land through a financial institution such as the land bank.