

Stewardship, Creation, and The Treatment of Animals

Proverbs 12:10a

“Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast”

1. Theological Foundations
 - a. God created the world good and gave men and women the task of using and stewarding it. (Genesis 1:31a; Genesis 1:26)
 - b. Animals are part of God’s good creation, and are given to people for their use (including, at least after the fall, to be eaten). (Genesis 1:25; Genesis 9:3)
 - c. The Eighth Commandment (“you shall not steal”) has several implications for our understanding of personal property, stewardship, and care for creation, including animal life.

2. God’s Word has much to say about the treatment of animals.
 - a. *Animals should be included in Sabbath rest.*
 - i. Exodus 20:10
 - ii. Exodus 23:10-11
 - iii. Exodus 23:12
 - iv. Leviticus 25:5-7
 - b. *Working animals should enjoy the rewards of their work.*
 - i. Deuteronomy 25:4
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 5:17-18
 - c. *The law protects against destroying species.*
 - i. Leviticus 22:28
 - ii. Deuteronomy 22:6-7
 - d. *Lost domestic animals must be helped and returned.*
 - i. Deuteronomy 22:1-4
 - ii. Exodus 23:4-5

3. Putting it all together: a theology of care for creation (including animals)

- a. The abuse of animals - domestic or wild, from birds to cattle - is clearly and definitely forbidden. Indeed, positive and intentional care for animals is required.

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- b. Human beings alone are made in the image of God. A clear distinction of kind (not merely degree) is thereby made between human life and animal life. Animals may be used in a way that human beings may not be used.
- c. The Christian view of creation should avoid both the worship of the environment and the wanton disregard for the good of the environment.

4. Does this really matter for Christians? What does this have to do with the gospel?

- a. 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”
- b. In Christ as the second Adam, we are restored to a right relationship with God’s good creation.
- c. Romans 8:19-22 “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”
- d. We are called to live as colonies and outposts of that new creation in the here and now.