

THE LAND

Throughout history, men and women have given their lives in defense of ‘the land.’ An early example, set forth in the Bible in First Kings, chapter 21, is that of a landowner who was killed rather than surrender the small piece of property he owned next to the King’s palace.

Also according to the Bible, God made the first ever land grant to Adam, in Genesis, chapter 2. He emphasized the importance of stewardship, in the 25th chapter of Leviticus, when he commanded the nation of Israel to leave the land idle every seventh year, not removing vegetation, so the land could replenish itself. (The command was not heeded, and both Israel and the land suffered the consequences.)

The above references demonstrate the oneness of man and the land, a relationship as old as history itself and which continues to endure. The fragile interdependence of the land’s need for stewardship and man’s requirements for the fruits of the land has never been more visible than it is today.

Dr. Norman Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, once described a ‘highway’ of cereal grains, circling the equator. Imagine it as being more than eight feet thick and 65 feet wide. The highway represents the amount of production needed to feed the world’s population for a single year. Just to keep up with human food demands, it must be ‘rebuilt’ every 12 months and an additional 650 miles added. Those numbers are startling, but consider the fact that arable land available for agricultural production will only amount to about a half-acre per person within the next 25 years.

Can agriculture provide sufficient food for the world’s growing population with the shrinking per-capita land base? It can, but only if science continues to develop new technologies which allow us to grow more crops per unit of land...and only if we maintain our commitment to stewardship.

My late brother, Hack, was a farmer and dairyman. He believed in the Bible, and he loved the land. He provided me with the biblical references cited above and also shared his thoughts about **‘the land’**, and I quote, “May I say that the relationship (between mankind and the land) is too evident to scoff at, and I believe farmers today try harder than anyone to preserve this heritage and put something back.”

Hack was right on both counts.



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