

Reconnecting with the Earth

by Richard Fowler

There's a danger of losing our tenure on this planet.¹

Scary thought! These are the words of scientist James Lovelock, one of the most influential environmental thinkers of our time. Aged 99, he is gentle and unassuming but has powerful ideas. One of them being that climate change will wipe out most of us in this century.²

Maybe you, like me, in the constant stream of the global warming rhetoric, find it hard to separate the hot air from the 'so what can I do on a personal level' stuff? I think this is where Lovelock's

ideas can help. I like them for their simplicity in the midst of a hugely complex global problem.

Lovelock calls his idea 'Gaia Theory'. Widely debated by scientists, he believes the Earth is a self-regulating system, that the Earth—Gaia—is alive like any other living thing. Gaia looks after us. In support of this view, he argues: 'The Earth has an impossible atmosphere... the odds against it run into countless billions-to-one against'.³ Lovelock elsewhere hypothesises that because we have not looked after Earth, the system is out of balance. What does he suggest we do to help the system re-adjust? We must reconnect with nature.

Machines, technology, and cities have taken our attention, separating us from mother nature. We have left our first love for the love of another. Maybe this terrestrial cheating has led us to neglect that which cares for us, the Earth. But can we do something?

Reconnecting is about where we direct our interest and attention. When we give appropriate attention to our relationships, they thrive. In the same way, Lovelock suggests taking more of an interest in the natural world: in plants, animals, and things that grow naturally, paying attention to the life around us. This can work on a simple level.

The night I watched Lovelock being interviewed, I realised I had



been stuck indoors giving all my attention to my computer screen. I couldn't remember the last time I had gone for a walk. I knew I needed fresh air and a change of environment. That night I went for a long overdue walk.

I noticed my breathing, the stars and moon, the stillness and silence. I felt lighter, more relaxed. The stress I had experienced by the incessant use of my laptop subsided. I looked up at the infinitely complex universe and my perspective changed. I connected with nature and something more spiritual than just the next thing in my inbox. I walked past some litter. This time I had time to do something about it. I placed it in the nearest recycling bin. I was taking care of what takes care of me.

When we take time to reconnect with nature we notice more. And in noticing we can make changes to help our home become a better home.

Maybe you believe, like James Lovelock, that Earth is a living holistic organism that, with a little TLC, is able to self-regulate and repair itself. Or like me, as a Christian, you believe that a vastly superior intelligence designed our incredible universe to do that self-regulation and repair work. Either way, I would argue that reconnecting with nature is healthy for us and our planet.

This week take time to reconnect with the natural world.

NOTES

- ¹ www.bbc.com/ideas/videos/theresa-danger-oflosing-our-tenure-on-this-plane/p06yyqvc .
- ² www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2008/mar/01/scienceofclimatechange .
- ³ www.bbc.com/ideas/videos/theresa-danger-oflosing-our-tenure-on-this-plane/p06yyqvc .

A Climate of Change

by Peter Mill

Hardly a day goes by, it seems, without climate change featuring in our news reports. Recently the Guardian newspaper in the UK announced it has updated its style guide to introduce terms that more accurately describe what it sees as the environmental crisis facing the world.

Instead of 'climate change' which editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner thinks sounds rather passive and gentle, the preferred terms are 'climate emergency', 'crisis' or 'breakdown', with 'global heating' being favoured over 'global warming'.

Are these concerns exaggerated? Not according to many. In another recent high profile story, The UK Environment Agency warned that the impact of a forecast global temperature rise of 4°C could lead to whole communities having to move away from coasts and rivers,

meaning that villages and even towns could be abandoned.

As a Christian, which to me means a follower of Christ, my knee-jerk reaction when I hear these disturbing reports is to ask myself what would Jesus think about it all? How would he react? What would he say or do?

On the subject of climate change, he is silent in the gospels. Perhaps not surprising when you consider how different a place the world was 2000 years ago. Yet in his famous Sermon on the Mount, he made this simple, yet profound statement: 'In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you'.¹

The implications behind those words stretch far beyond our management or mismanagement of the environment. How do we deal with the impact of climate emergencies such as flood or drought, crop failures or disease epidemics on those who are least able to cope, the world's poor?

NOTE

- ¹ Matthew 7:12.

