

# Christian Stewardship to God-given Natural Resources for Sustainability: A Biblical Perspective (Genesis 1:26-30 and Psalm 24:1) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG #14 & #15)

**Olusegun James Adigun**

Department of Religious and Intercultural Studies, Faculty of Arts Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0163-5992>

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**Abstract:** *The deterioration of the environment, alterations in climate, and the decline of biodiversity have prompted significant global apprehensions, particularly highlighted by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) underscore the imperative to safeguard both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Within Christian theology, stewardship is perceived as a divine obligation, wherein humanity is charged with the responsibility of nurturing and conserving God's creation. Nevertheless, human actions persist in damaging natural resources, thereby jeopardizing sustainability and contravening scriptural tenets of care and justice. This research seeks to investigate the concept of Christian stewardship regarding divinely entrusted natural resources through a biblical lens, assessing the congruence of this theological framework with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, which emphasize sustainability and environmental accountability. The methodology employed includes a qualitative and theological approach, featuring Scriptural Exegesis of significant biblical passages (such as Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1) to derive theological tenets of stewardship, a Literature Review of Christian environmental ethics alongside sustainable development frameworks, and a Comparative Analysis of biblical stewardship doctrines in relation to the targets set forth by SDGs 14 and 15. The research revealed a significant theological foundation for environmental stewardship within Christian teachings. The concept of biblical stewardship extends beyond mere dominion; it encompasses responsible guardianship, accountability, and sustainability. This perspective aligns closely with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, particularly in fostering biodiversity, minimizing pollution, and safeguarding habitats. Additionally, numerous faith-based organizations are already engaged in conservation efforts motivated by their religious beliefs. In conclusion, Christian stewardship offers a moral and spiritual framework that enhances scientific and policy-oriented strategies for sustainable development. The biblical imperative to care for creation resonates with fundamental values shared by the SDGs, including justice, sustainability, and intergenerational responsibility. It is recommended that faith communities increase their participation in environmental advocacy and education. Churches should incorporate environmental stewardship into their teachings and practices. Furthermore, collaborations among religious organizations, governmental bodies, and NGOs should be strengthened to promote the advancement of SDGs 14 and 15. Future research should investigate the effects of faith-based environmental initiatives on both local and global sustainability outcomes.*

**Keywords:** Christian Stewardship, Biblical Sustainability, Theological Ethics, Creation Care, Climate Change and Christianity

## INTRODUCTION

The natural environment, which includes the earth's land and aquatic ecosystems, is increasingly deteriorating due to human activities such as deforestation, overfishing, pollution, and climate change. These environmental issues pose a significant threat to the sustainability of life on our planet and necessitate immediate global action. In response, the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to create a comprehensive framework for tackling global challenges, including environmental sustainability. Notably, SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) focus on the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, the restoration of degraded environments, and the prevention of biodiversity loss (United Nations, 2015). From a theological perspective, the Christian faith provides a strong moral and spiritual basis for environmental stewardship. The Bible depicts creation as fundamentally good and under divine ownership, with humans designated as stewards responsible for its maintenance (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 24:1). This stewardship concept is grounded in the belief that all-natural resources are divine gifts that should be managed judiciously rather than exploited for selfish purposes. Christian stewardship underscores the importance of accountability, justice, sustainability, and the preservation of life principles that align closely with the aims of SDG 14 and SDG 15 (Horrell, 2010; Wirzba, 2015). Notwithstanding the theological imperative for environmental stewardship, ecological disregard continues to exist even among faith-based groups. This discrepancy underscores the necessity to reaffirm biblical principles that advocate for the responsible stewardship of divinely entrusted resources. A scriptural viewpoint on stewardship not only urges adherents to embrace ecological accountability but also corresponds with worldwide sustainability initiatives focused on safeguarding terrestrial and aquatic life. As noted by DeWitt (2008), when religious communities participate in environmental advocacy grounded in biblical teachings, they play a crucial role in advancing global sustainability efforts.

The notion of Christian stewardship is fundamentally anchored in the conviction that all-natural resources are divine gifts, entrusted to humanity for prudent oversight. As articulated in Genesis 1:28, God instructs humans to "fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every living creature that moves on the ground" (New International Version [NIV]). This divine directive lays the groundwork for Christian accountability in resource management, highlighting the dual aspects of dominion and stewardship (Wright, 2004). Contemporary discourse on environmental ethics and sustainability resonates with these biblical tenets, advocating for fair resource distribution, ecological preservation, and strategic long-term planning (DeWitt, 2012). Christian stewardship urges believers to acknowledge their moral and theological obligations in safeguarding God's creation, positioning sustainable resource management as not merely an environmental concern but also a spiritual and ethical imperative (Horrell, 2010). Biblical principles of stewardship continue to hold significance in confronting modern environmental and economic issues. The notion of creation care, as articulated in Psalm 24:1 ("The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it"), encourages Christians to champion efforts in environmental preservation and sustainable development (Bauckham, 2010). Numerous faith-based organizations are actively engaged in promoting sustainable practices, which encompass conservation initiatives, ethical investment approaches, and corporate responsibility programs (Horrell, 2010). The encyclical *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis serves as a prime example of how Christian teachings influence the global dialogue on sustainability, calling upon believers to take action against climate change and ecological degradation (DeWitt, 2012).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations provide a comprehensive framework for tackling the pressing issues confronting our planet. Notably, SDG 14: Life Below Water and SDG 15: Life on Land play a vital role in fostering ecological equilibrium and biodiversity. These objectives highlight the urgent necessity to safeguard marine and terrestrial ecosystems from anthropogenic threats, including overexploitation, pollution, habitat degradation, and climate change (United Nations, 2015). SDG 14 emphasizes the conservation and sustainable utilization of oceans, seas, and marine resources, which are essential for life on Earth, as they regulate climate, support biodiversity, and offer food and livelihoods to billions. Nevertheless, the health of marine ecosystems is deteriorating swiftly due to overfishing, plastic waste, ocean acidification, and coral reef destruction (FAO, 2022). This situation necessitates a transition from exploitation to stewardship and preservation—principles that resonate with the biblical concept of stewardship. Conversely, SDG 15 focuses on the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems, particularly forests, drylands, and biodiversity. It underscores the essential role of land in sustaining human existence and providing ecosystem services such as clean water, climate regulation, and food production. Global threats such as deforestation, desertification, and species extinction continue to jeopardize these systems (UNEP, 2021). From a Christian viewpoint, the stewardship of land is a sacred duty, as highlighted in scriptures like Genesis 2:15, which instructs humanity to 'till and keep' the garden. Researchers emphasize that environmental stewardship fundamentally entails the responsible management and care of creation (DeWitt, 2008; Horrell et al., 2010). This concept acknowledges that the Earth is a divine creation (Psalm 24:1) and that humanity is designated as caretakers rather than owners. This viewpoint is consistent with the goals of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14 and 15, which seek to protect ecosystems for both present and future generations. Additionally, studies indicate that faith-based organizations have increasingly engaged in sustainability efforts, particularly those that advocate for conservation and environmental justice (Tucker & Grim, 2014). Their involvement lends moral authority and the ability to mobilize grassroots support, both of which are essential for the effective execution of programs related to the SDGs. When informed by stewardship theology, churches and religious organizations can spearhead initiatives in education, advocacy, and action aimed at preserving terrestrial and aquatic life.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the rich array of natural resources and the biblical call for stewardship, the planet continues to experience concerning levels of environmental decline, especially within marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Practices such as overfishing, deforestation, pollution, and habitat destruction are swiftly eroding biodiversity and jeopardizing ecological equilibrium, thus hindering the pursuit of sustainability objectives like SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Although international agreements stress the urgency for action, there exists a significant disconnect between the theological tenets of stewardship and tangible environmental involvement, particularly among Christian groups. While the Bible explicitly instructs humanity to 'tend and keep' the Earth (Genesis 2:15) and recognizes that 'the Earth is the Lord's' (Psalm 24:1), a considerable number of believers remain either uninformed or disengaged from ecological sustainability matters. This situation highlights a disparity between Christian theological doctrines and the practical application of environmental responsibility. Moreover, the potential for faith-based viewpoints to significantly enhance the discourse on sustainable development is frequently underexploited in both policy-making and grassroots environmental efforts. Consequently, this research aims to explore how biblical principles of Christian stewardship can be effectively implemented to foster the sustainable utilization and preservation of divinely entrusted natural resources, in accordance with the objectives and targets of SDG 14 and SDG 15. Bridging this gap is essential for encouraging faith communities to engage more actively and theologically in environmental sustainability.

## Objectives of the Study

The escalating environmental crisis, especially the deterioration of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, necessitates a comprehensive approach that encompasses spiritual, ethical, and practical aspects. Christian theology, grounded in biblical teachings, provides a framework for environmental stewardship. This research seeks to connect Christian beliefs with global sustainability initiatives, particularly in the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 14 and 15. The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To investigate the biblical notion of stewardship and its relevance to the responsible management and preservation of natural resources.
2. To delve into the theological and ethical underpinnings of Christian environmental responsibility, particularly in relation to marine (SDG 14) and terrestrial (SDG 15) ecosystems.
3. To assess the congruence between Christian stewardship principles and the objectives of SDG 14 and SDG 15.
4. To examine the present involvement of Christian communities and churches in fostering ecological sustainability and environmental advocacy.
5. To suggest faith-based strategies for incorporating biblical stewardship into environmental sustainability efforts.

## Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as the basis for comprehending Christian stewardship and the obligation to manage God-given natural resources within the realm of sustainability. This research is anchored in various essential biblical, theological, and environmental theories, which together present a systematic methodology for resource management viewed through a Christian lens.

1. **Biblical Stewardship Theory:** Biblical Stewardship Theory serves as the foundational theoretical framework for this research. It posits that human function as caretakers rather than proprietors of creation, with all resources ultimately belonging to God, as articulated in Psalm 24:1. This viewpoint is rooted in the dominion mandate found in Genesis 1:26-28, which calls upon humanity to exercise authority over the earth in a manner that embodies divine wisdom and justice (Wright, 2004). Importantly, this concept of dominion does not endorse irresponsible exploitation; instead, it advocates for conscientious stewardship (Bauckham, 2010). The dual Hebrew verbs “abad” (to serve or cultivate) and “shamar” (to keep or preserve) in Genesis 2:15 highlight the necessity of balancing productivity with sustainability (DeWitt, 2012). This principle is further exemplified in Exodus 16:16-20, where the Israelites were directed to gather only what was necessary, thereby reinforcing the values of moderation and reliance on God’s provision (Hamilton, 2011). Consequently, Biblical Stewardship Theory offers a theological framework for comprehending sustainability, underscoring the notion that humans are accountable managers of God’s resources, responsible for their appropriate use and conservation (Horrell, 2010).
2. **Creation Care Theory:** Creation Care Theory, which is closely linked to the concept of biblical stewardship, underscores the obligation of Christians to safeguard and cultivate the environment. This viewpoint resonates with Psalm 8:6, which recognizes human dominion over creation while simultaneously suggesting an ethical duty (Bauckham, 2010). The principles of creation care are further illustrated in the Sabbath Year and Jubilee Laws (Leviticus 25:1-17), which require periodic rest for the land and economic resets to avert overexploitation and social disparities (Wright, 2004). This framework is consistent with modern sustainability paradigms that promote



ecological equilibrium and equitable resource allocation (DeWitt, 2012). Contemporary theological perspectives, such as Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), highlight the moral and spiritual aspects of environmental stewardship, calling on Christians to address issues such as climate change, pollution, and the decline of biodiversity (Horrell, 2010). Consequently, Creation Care Theory functions as a faith-oriented ethical framework for environmental stewardship, directing Christians towards sustainable and equitable environmental practices.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Biblical Foundation of Christian Stewardship

The core principle of Christian stewardship posits that God is the supreme owner of all creation. This idea is articulated in Psalm 24:1, which asserts, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (New International Version, 2011). Similarly, Haggai 2:8 reinforces this notion, with God proclaiming, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (NIV, 2011). Scholars such as Rodin (2000) and Hall (1990) argue that humanity is called to be stewards rather than owners, tasked with managing resources in alignment with divine intentions. In Genesis 1:26-28, the biblical text delineates humanity's role as guardians of creation. God instructs Adam and Eve to "fill the earth and subdue it," which implies a duty to oversee the environment and all living creatures (NIV, 2011). Wright (2013) emphasizes that this stewardship embodies God's desire for humans to engage with creation in a cooperative manner rather than exploitative. Jesus often discussed stewardship through his parables. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) exemplifies the concept of accountability, illustrating that believers are expected to utilize their gifts and resources judiciously (NIV, 2011). Conversely, the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21) cautions against the accumulation of wealth without regard for God's kingdom (NIV, 2011). Scholars like Blomberg (1999) contend that these parables highlight not only financial stewardship but also the wider obligation to manage time, skills, and interpersonal relationships effectively. The Bible underscores the significance of financial stewardship. In Malachi 3:10, believers are instructed to bring their tithes into the storehouse, with a promise of divine blessings in return (NIV, 2011). This concept is further developed in the New Testament, where 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 advocates for giving with joy (NIV, 2011). The teachings of John Wesley in the 18th century highlight the necessity of earning, saving, and giving as integral components of worship. Moreover, Ephesians 5:15-16 encourages believers to "make the most of every opportunity," thereby emphasizing the critical nature of time management (NIV, 2011). In a similar vein, 1 Peter 4:10 instructs that each individual should utilize their unique gifts to serve others (NIV, 2011). Scholars such as Dayton (2006) argue that the concept of stewardship encompasses not only financial resources but also time, talents, and spiritual gifts.

The interpretation of the concept of dominion as presented in Genesis 1:28 has been subject to diverse understandings. Certain theologians, such as Schaeffer (1970), contend that dominion should be viewed as a call for responsible stewardship rather than a license for exploitation. Additionally, some scholars highlight the covenantal bond between humanity and the created order, positing that stewardship is fundamentally an expression of obedience and worship. Furthermore, Christian stewardship is intricately connected to eschatological beliefs, particularly the anticipation of Christ's return and the subsequent renewal of creation. Revelation 21:1 articulates the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, implying that the stewardship exercised by believers plays a significant role in God's overarching redemptive narrative (NIV, 2011). McGrath (2001) argues that a nuanced understanding of stewardship cultivates a hopeful and responsible approach to caring for creation.

**Exegesis Analysis of Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1**

From a biblical standpoint, environmental stewardship is fundamentally anchored in the scriptural interpretation of humanity's responsibility towards God's creation. The verses Genesis 1:26–30, Psalm 24:1, and Revelation 11:18 collectively establish a theological basis that positions humans not as exploiters but as guardians of the earth. These texts embody principles that align with the objectives of SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), which aim to safeguard marine and terrestrial ecosystems for both present and future generations.

- a) **Genesis 1:26–30** constitutes a significant segment of the initial creation account, wherein God orchestrates order and organization within the universe. This excerpt represents the pinnacle of creation, highlighting the emergence of humanity, which is distinctively crafted in the 'image of God' (*imago Dei*). In contrast to other beings, humans are entrusted with a particular responsibility of governance and stewardship over the created world (DeWitt, 2008). This passage not only articulates a functional understanding of humanity's role in relation to the broader creation but also delineates the divine intention for the interaction between humans and the natural world. This interaction is characterized by collaboration and nurturing rather than exploitation.

The term 'Dominion' (**radah**) is frequently misinterpreted as mere domination; however, in Hebrew, *radah* signifies governing or managing with diligence, akin to the stewardship of a shepherd (Horrell, 2010). Humanity is tasked with embodying God's compassionate sovereignty, focusing on the protection and service of creation rather than exploitation. The word 'Subdue' (**kabash**) carries a more intense implication, yet within the framework of an ideal and unblemished world, it suggests the necessity of overseeing creation with wisdom and respect, rather than through violence or destruction (Wirzba, 2015). This perspective encourages Christians to view their responsibilities not as proprietors but as entrusted guardians of God's flourishing creation, aligning with contemporary principles of environmental sustainability.

- b) Psalm 24:1 is a liturgical hymn traditionally ascribed to David, commencing with a profound theological assertion of God's universal dominion over all creation. The opening verse establishes the psalm's overarching theme, which extols God's holiness, might, and rightful authority over the universe. The proclamation that 'the earth is the Lord's' (Hebrew: *laYHWH ha'arets*) directly challenges any human assertion of ultimate ownership or absolute control over the earth (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014). Within the framework of Christian stewardship, this verse serves as a vital theological underpinning: all creation belongs to God, and humanity is appointed to nurture it as stewards rather than owners (Bouma-Prediger, 2010). This perspective emphasizes accountability and reverence as central tenets of ecological ethics. The phrase 'the earth is the Lord's' suggests a cosmic ownership, encompassing the land, seas, atmosphere, animals, and humanity under God's authority. This worldview stands in stark contrast to contemporary exploitative attitudes towards the environment, which frequently regard nature merely as a commodity. From a stewardship standpoint, divine ownership implies that: Human beings are caretakers rather than landlords; the natural world possesses intrinsic value beyond mere utility; and environmental degradation constitutes a breach of God's trust and creation. This principle is further reflected in biblical law, which mandated that the land be allowed to rest every seven years (Leviticus 25), indicating that creation is not to be exploited by humanity but is to be honored in accordance with divine directives (Wirzba, 2015).

### **Analysis of SDG 14 and SDG 15**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, serve as a comprehensive framework for fostering a more sustainable and improved future. Notably, SDG 14: Life Below Water and SDG 15: Life on Land play crucial roles in the preservation of biodiversity and the promotion of ecological sustainability. Specifically, SDG 14 is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable utilization of oceans, seas, and marine resources, whereas SDG 15 focuses on the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems (United Nations [UN], 2015). The oceans, which encompass more than 70% of the Earth's surface, play a vital role in regulating climate, supporting biodiversity, and sustaining human livelihoods. Nevertheless, these marine ecosystems face escalating threats from anthropogenic activities, including overfishing, pollution, and climate change (Pauly, 2002). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) reports that around 34% of global fish stocks are overexploited, jeopardizing marine food security. Plastic pollution stands out as one of the most urgent issues confronting marine ecosystems, with an estimated 8 million metric tons of plastic waste entering the oceans annually, significantly affecting marine species and food chains (Jambeck et al 2015). Additionally, ocean acidification, driven by the absorption of increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, poses a threat to coral reefs and shell-forming organisms, potentially disrupting entire marine food webs (Gattuso, 2015). Initiatives aimed at mitigating these challenges include the enhancement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which can facilitate the recovery of biodiversity and the replenishment of fish stocks. However, merely about 8% of the ocean is currently protected, and many MPAs suffer from insufficient enforcement (Rife, 2012). To realize Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), it is essential to bolster international governance and invest in marine science and sustainable fisheries (Lubchenco & Grorud-Colvert, 2015). Terrestrial ecosystems are crucial, as they sustain nearly 80% of the global biodiversity (UNEP, 2020). However, they are under threat from deforestation, desertification, and changes in land use. The rate of global forest cover loss is alarming, especially in tropical areas. From 2015 to 2020, approximately 4.7 million hectares of forest were lost each year (FAO, 2020). The pace of biodiversity decline is quickening, with one million species facing extinction due to anthropogenic factors (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services [IPBES], 2019). Major contributors to this crisis include habitat destruction, the introduction of invasive species, pollution, and climate change. For example, forest fragmentation diminishes biodiversity, elevates carbon emissions, and disrupts ecological processes (Barlow, 2016). Restoration efforts such as afforestation, agroforestry, and ecosystem rehabilitation are essential to combat land degradation. Chazdon (2016) contend that supporting natural forest regeneration through policy and community involvement is both a cost-effective and ecologically advantageous approach. Indigenous and local communities are pivotal in conservation efforts, as they oversee biodiversity-rich lands, yet they frequently encounter marginalization within formal environmental governance structures (Garnett, 2018).

### **Comparison of Biblical Standpoint (Genesis 1:26-30 and Psalm 24:1) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG #14 & #15)**

The connection between biblical principles and modern environmental ethics, particularly as outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has attracted significant academic interest. Notably, SDG 14 ('Life Below Water') and SDG 15 ('Life on Land') focus on the conservation and sustainable management of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (United Nations, 2015). These objectives align with the biblical injunctions presented in Genesis 1:26-30 and Psalm 24:1, which define humanity's responsibilities towards creation. Genesis 1:26-30 establishes the essential Judeo-Christian viewpoint regarding humanity's stewardship of the earth. Sustainable Development Goal 14 emphasizes the preservation of oceans, seas, and marine resources, whereas Sustainable Development Goal 15 is

dedicated to safeguarding terrestrial ecosystems, preventing biodiversity loss, and managing forests sustainably (United Nations, 2015). Both objectives embody a profound ecological concern that resonates with the Biblical perspective of the earth as a sacred creation worthy of stewardship and reverence. Researchers such as Horrell (2010) contend that biblical scriptures, when analyzed through an ecological lens, endorse environmental ethics that align with the objectives of the SDGs. This connection is further reinforced by the emerging discipline of ecotheology, which aims to integrate scriptural principles with ecological accountability (Santmire, 2000). Proponents of ecotheology encourage an interpretation of Genesis 1 that perceives dominion as a form of service (diakonia) rather than oppression. In this framework, humanity's responsibility is framed as sustainable stewardship, mirroring the ideals inherent in the SDGs.

The two tables presented below illustrate the relationship between the Biblical perspective and Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15.

**Table 1: The Correlation between the Biblical Perspective and Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, analyzed the goals individually**

Aspect	Biblical Foundation	SDG 14 (Life Below Water)	SDG 15 (Life on Land)
<b>Core Principle</b>	Humanity is given dominion and stewardship over creation (Genesis 1:26–30); all of Earth belongs to God (Psalm 24:1).	Conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources.	Protection, restoration, and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity.
<b>View of Nature</b>	Creation is "very good" (Genesis 1:31); Earth is God's possession, not humanity's to exploit (Psalm 24:1).	Oceans are vital ecosystems that must be preserved for biodiversity and climate stability.	Forests, land, and biodiversity must be preserved for their ecological, cultural, and climate-regulating roles.
<b>Human Responsibility</b>	Humans must care for creation, not dominate destructively (Genesis 2:15, implied in 1:28–30).	Reduce marine pollution, regulate fishing, and protect marine ecosystems.	Combat deforestation, halt biodiversity loss, and promote land restoration.
<b>Ethical Motivation</b>	Divine command and reverence for God's creation; moral duty to preserve what belongs to God.	Scientific and humanitarian need for sustainability, biodiversity, and food security.	Ethical obligation to future generations and intrinsic value of nature.
<b>Ownership Perspective</b>	Earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1); humans are caretakers, not owners.	Implies collective responsibility, but lacks spiritual ownership language.	Promotes shared stewardship, but within secular international governance.
<b>Intergenerational Focus</b>	Stewardship implies responsibility to future generations (Genesis 1:28).	Explicit goal to ensure ocean sustainability for future generations.	Explicit target to restore degraded land and ensure biodiversity for future resilience.
<b>Theological vs Secular</b>	Theological - rooted in divine authority and moral obligation.	Secular - based on international consensus, environmental science, and development goals.	Secular - guided by global policy and environmental protection standards.
<b>Shared Values</b>	Care for creation, responsibility, humility, preservation.	Environmental sustainability, justice, equity, preservation of natural systems.	Biodiversity, sustainability, climate action, and restoration of ecosystems.



**Table 2: An Analysis of the Relationship between the Biblical Perspective and Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, Examined Collectively**

Feature	Biblical Foundation (Genesis 1:26-30, Psalm 24:1)	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 14 & 15)
<b>Creator/Owner of Creation</b>	God is the ultimate creator and owner of the earth, all life, and everything in it.	Acknowledges the interconnectedness of human and natural systems and the need for stewardship of natural resources.
<b>Human Role</b>	Humans are created in God's image, given dominion over creation, and tasked with stewardship of the earth.	Recognizes human responsibility for caring for the environment and balancing human needs with ecological integrity.
<b>Focus of Care</b>	The Bible emphasizes caring for the creation, including land, animals, and the earth's resources.	SDGs 14 (Life Below Water) and 15 (Life on Land) focus on conserving and restoring biodiversity, addressing pollution, and promoting sustainable resource management.
<b>Impact of Disobedience</b>	Disobedience and exploitation of creation lead to negative consequences, including environmental degradation and societal problems.	Unsustainable practices have detrimental impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, and the planet's overall health.
<b>Call to Action</b>	Biblical texts call for humans to exercise responsible stewardship, care for the environment, and live in harmony with creation.	SDGs 14 & 15 set specific targets for environmental protection and sustainable resource management, encouraging global cooperation and action.

### **Challenges posed by non-compliance with Biblical Stewardship as outlined in Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1, in relation to Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15.**

Biblical passages such as Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1 provide a profound theological basis for environmental stewardship, depicting humanity as guardians of God's creation rather than as exploiters. In a similar vein, Sustainable Development Goals 14 ('Life Below Water') and 15 ('Life on Land') establish ambitious objectives aimed at preserving marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Nevertheless, these principles face increasing threats from global environmental degradation and human activities that undermine both biblical teachings and sustainability efforts. Genesis 1:26–30 bestows dominion upon humanity, a notion frequently misinterpreted to rationalize exploitation instead of stewardship (White, 1967). Psalm 24:1 reinforces the concept of the earth as belonging to God—"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it highlighting a divine ownership that necessitates respect and accountability (Bouma-Prediger, 2010). However, issues such as industrial overreach, deforestation, ocean pollution, and biodiversity loss signify a deviation from this sacred duty. These environmental challenges distort the constructive theological understanding of 'dominion,' substituting the call to nurture creation with systems of control and resource depletion (DeWitt, 1994). For instance, the overexploitation and pollution of marine environments contradict the biblical vision of provision and equilibrium presented in the Genesis creation narrative. Theologically, human negligence has transformed dominion into destruction, thereby undermining the moral foundation of biblical environmental ethics (Horrell et al., 2010).

Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, while secular in nature, embody ethical principles akin to those found in biblical stewardship. SDG 14 aims to protect marine biodiversity, whereas SDG 15 is dedicated to the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems. However, both goals face significant challenges from ongoing environmental issues, including:

- a) Pollution and plastic waste degrading ocean ecosystems (Jambeck ., 2015).

- b) Overfishing and unsustainable marine harvesting, violating SDG 14.4 and harming livelihoods and food security (Pauly & Zeller, 2016).
- c) Deforestation and land degradation, which disrupt ecosystems, threaten species, and contradict SDG 15.1 and 15.2 (Laurance et al, 2014).
- d) Climate change, which affects both marine and terrestrial life, and exacerbates global inequality and ecological injustice (IPBES, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Christian stewardship, as established in Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1, urges believers to manage the Earth with responsibility as guardians of God's creation. These passages highlight that the Earth is God's possession and that humanity's function is to serve rather than to dominate. This theological viewpoint is closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, which focus on the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems for enduring sustainability. By merging biblical teachings with global development aims, Christian stewardship provides both a moral and spiritual obligation for ecological preservation. Ultimately, faith-driven environmental responsibility emphasizes the critical need for sustainable practices, ensuring that natural resources are maintained not only as sacred gifts but also as essential pillars for human and planetary health.

## Recommendation

The connection between SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) with biblical principles specifically Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1 underscores a collective ethical responsibility to safeguard and sustain God's creation. Nevertheless, ongoing environmental challenges threaten this moral framework. The following suggestions are offered to address these challenges in a manner that respects both sustainable development and biblical stewardship:

- a) Integrate Scripture into Environmental Campaigns: Faith-based environmental campaigns should use biblical texts such as Genesis 1:26–30 and Psalm 24:1 to inspire community involvement and deepen the ethical commitment to achieving SDG 14 and 15. This helps ground global goals in locally meaningful spiritual language.
- b) Develop Collaborative Platforms Between Religious and Environmental Sectors: Establish networks that unite Christian communities with environmental scientists, NGOs, and policymakers. Such collaboration can bridge gaps between faith and science, ensuring that SDG implementation benefits from both spiritual motivation and scientific guidance.
- c) Implement Community-Based Conservation with Faith Leadership: Empower local churches and faith leaders to lead marine and land conservation projects. Their trusted positions can mobilize grassroots support and ensure that SDG 14 and 15 efforts resonate with local moral and cultural values.
- d) Support Sustainable Livelihoods Through Faith-Inspired Initiatives: Encourage Christian organizations to invest in or support eco-friendly businesses, sustainable farming and responsible fishing practices that help communities achieve economic goals without compromising environmental health.

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