

Engage360 Episode 164 | Environmental Theology: The Bible, the Church, and Creation Care

Guest: Dr. Sandra Richter

[00:00:16] **Angie Ward:** Hi, friends. Welcome to Engage 360 Denver Seminaries podcast. I am your host, Angie Ward. I serve as the director of the Doctor of Ministry program and professor of ministry and Leadership here at Denver Seminary. for joining us for today's conversation. I am privileged today to host our conversation with Dr. Sandra Richter. So Sandy is the Robert h Gundry Chair of Biblical Studies at theological Seminary. areas of focus include Deuteronomy and the

[00:00:55] **Sandy Richter:** I was gonna, you know, people have to practice that for weeks, so,

[00:00:59] **Angie Ward:** Right.

[00:01:00] **Sandy Richter:** yeah.

[00:01:00] **Angie Ward:** did. Along with environmental theology. So we are not going to talk today about Deuteronomistic

[00:01:06] **Sandy Richter:** come on.

[00:01:06] **Angie Ward:** are going to talk about environmental theology, which is what scripture says about the environment and why it matters. And that is actually the subtitle of one of her books, stewards of Eden. What the scripture says about the environment and why it matters. And she has also, I love this written a

[00:01:22] **Sandy Richter:** Yes.

[00:01:22] **Angie Ward:** book with IVP inter Varsity Press called Abigail and the Waterfall Loving God's Good Earth.

So, okay let's dive into this because I know nothing about Deuteronomistic history, but I can ask questions about environmental

[00:01:35] **Sandy Richter:** okay.

[00:01:36] **Angie Ward:** So, so. Tell me just in layman's terms, what scripture says about the environment and why it matters. Like, what's your elevator pitch about environmental theology

[00:01:47] **Sandy Richter:** Well to a Christian. My elevator pitch is that the church is very confused about environmental theology. And one of the things that troubles me so much is that we, as the church, have served as the moral compass for society for, oh, I don't know, 2200 years. And, we're kind of paralyzed on the topic, and I launched the book with talking about why we're paralyzed on the topic and walked through the three big reasons. One is American politics. The other is common to all issues of social justice. We simply don't see the impact of our behavior. And in not seeing it we're not responding to it. And then the third issue is that there's. There are way too many out there that teach that it's all gonna burn anyway. And they believe

that is the New Testament posture on the topic. And so that leaves the church in this point of. Angst conflict over. No I know this is God's creation. I know he cares about it. I can see that in the scriptures and yet for some reason, I'm not supposed to care about it. And so that's usually where I start. And then ask the question. Based on our biblical identity, let's take it all the way down to our core rule of faith and praxis. We are biblical believers. Does the Bible demonstrate to us that we should be environmentally concerned and we go from there?

[00:03:36] **Angie Ward:** Well, and so, obviously starting in Genesis there, God creates the earth and then gives humanity, mm-hmm. over the earth. So, what, first of all, starting way back then, what does Dominion. because like you said, I think some say, well, it's ours to do with whatever we want.

[00:03:54] **Sandy Richter:** So I would like to introduce you to perhaps the only environmentalist who embraces dominion. So, this is one of the things that I believe the church finds very confusing is there are so many voices out there about environmental concern and so many of them want to ignore. All hierarchies, right? They're kind of working with that critical theory idea that hierarchy is bad. Power is bad. Dominion is bad. And yet, as I know, Genesis one is all about hierarchies. You know who goes where, who's in charge of what. So I do not hesitate to declare that humanity has been given dominion, but as we look at that perfect seven day structure that is offered to humanity in Genesis one and I would argue that the structure is. We're being offered a perfect week as a literary vehicle to answer the critical questions. Who is God, who is humanity? Who goes where, who's in charge of what? And as we go through those seven days, we find out, of course, on the seventh day, that the creator is overall, the only reason we live and move and have our being is because of his sovereignty over his great creation. But on the sixth day, he installed a steward and that steward humanity is specifically commissioned to tend and defend the garden in Genesis two 15. So as we think about humanity's place in this great creation. Does humanity have autonomy to do as he wishes? Well, that would be the fall now, wouldn't it?

Humanity, choosing to define good and evil for themselves to move themselves into that seven day slot is. Is how we wound up with this disaster that we're experiencing right now. So, no. Adam and Eve were given dominion under the sovereignty of God. They're supposed to rule as they've been ruled. They are supposed to in their life and their exercise of their authority demonstrate the character of God, right. This whole beautiful idea that we live out our lives in submission to the Almighty, and that is not only where human flourishing comes from, it's also where the testimony of the character of God comes from. We are his physical representatives on this planet. So what I do when I do the environmental theology is I and I have two different levels, probably more than two now. I have three because I have Abigail in the waterfall of communicating these truths. I have my technical stuff that. Would fly over the head of a lot of laypeople, but the book Stewards of Eden was specifically designed for the laity. That's why I wrote it. And what I do is I walk the reader through the great testimonies of God's relationship with humanity. So if you're a covenantal list you'll enjoy this very much because we start with a Covenant Eden, we move on to the covenant with Moses, and we move on to the new covenant. And in each of these, I demonstrate that God's directives to humanity included proper stewardship of the earth. Its flora and its fauna. So if we've got a God who in Eden, in Israel, in the new covenant and in the new Jerusalem is declaring to his stewards, Hey team, this stuff is mine. I'm giving it to you to use in your need, but if you abuse it in your greed, you're going to answer to me. If this is the God we serve, how do we think we're exempt of these commands to care for his creation?

[00:07:59] **Angie Ward:** Yeah. Wow. Well, so, it, but in light of, we talk about this, this earth world is not our mm-hmm. there'll be a new heaven and earth. So. What do you do with that idea that we're gonna have a new heaven and a new Earth? Why, why is it important?

[00:08:14] **Sandy Richter:** there are two arguments I would like to make here. So the first one is it. And as we walk through biblical theology, and you know me that yes, all my technical skills are an Old Testament and Deuteronomy and the Deistic history and all that, falderal and Fiddly D but I am a biblical theologian. So Epic of Eden, stewards of Eden. All that's what I do. And I believe with so much passion that. The, one of the great reasons the church stumbles in their understanding of the Old Testament is they don't realize that it's books one through five of the Great Harry Potter series, if you get my drift, that we're busy picking up. The great story in Matthew chapter one, and just like if we picked up Harry Potter in book five, we'd have no idea who serious black is. Is he a good guy? Is he bad guy? What does this guy, why does the kid have a lightning bolt on his forehead? We'd have missed so much of the story because we're not doing the overarching thing. So the question you're asking is it all gonna burn? So what the New Testament does in Thessalonians and in Peter is it picks up the day of the Lord, the Yahweh, which is heavily featured in the Old Testament as the day when Yahweh shows up. To defend his people and to bring justice to the oppressors of this planet.

The new covenant renames it. The Paraia, the second coming of Christ, but it's the same event. So it is the event, much like the flood in Noah's day, where Yahweh shows up. And he says, okay, I'm done. This earth has gotten itself to the point, not this earth. These people have gotten themselves to the point where they're so corrupt that holding the gates of heaven open one more minute is not gonna result in another soul saved. It's gonna result instead in the crushing of my people. So that y ywe that. Second coming Parousia the day when the white rider splits the clouds on heaven. It's the same event. And Meredith Klein would argue that it shows up in Genesis three the first time and it marches all the way through the text. So what is that day? And as we've already rehearsed, it's a day of judgment and deliverance. The prophet Amos shouts at his audience. Y'all think you're really excited for the Yahweh to show up? .

[00:10:53] **Angie Ward:** Careful what

[00:10:53] **Sandy Richter:** Exactly.

[00:10:54] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:10:54] **Sandy Richter:** To quote the old spiritual you better make sure whose side you're leaning on. Are you leaning on the Lord's side? Otherwise the YM Yahweh is not gonna be pleasant. Okay, so that's the. Encompassing concept. So now when Thessalonians and Peter pick the concept up, they're using all of the lexical language of the Old Testament to describe it. So they speak of fire. Yeah. And they speak of the world being rolled up like, like a scroll. Right. And too many have read those comments and. Not recognized that the authors are using the lexicon of the Old Testament 'cause the Yahweh shows up in a smaller version multiple times in the Old Testament, right? The Y Yahweh is when Nebuchadnezzar breaks through the walls of Jerusalem. The Yon Yahweh is when Yahweh defends Hezekiah against Anura. These are these great intrusions into our time. I'm giving too long an explanation. Okay, so the point being that these guys are reading this text assuming that the earth and the heavens are all gonna burn out and then be replaced with brand new. Well, NT Wright Gunton Moo the Great New Testament theologians of our time would argue no guys.

This is the symbolic language of the Yahweh and it speaks of that great epic divider when Yahweh steps in. Judges and brings about righteousness. So if you infuse that language with Old Testament language, you realize this is not necessarily, um. an annihilation of this planet. So now we wanna ask, okay, then what is it? And in the book, I turn to Romans chapter eight, and we're talking to Paul here. He's a rabbi. He does not have a membership guard in Greenpeace. He's never chained himself to an old growth oak tree. He's a rabbi, right? And in Romans chapter eight, he. Juxtaposes. The the coming of God's final purposes with the resurrection of this earth. He talks about how all creation is groaning, awaiting the day of the revealing of the sons of God. And then he goes on to speak of how the deliberate, liberation of the cosmos and the resurrection of the cosmos will happen at the same moment that the liberation and the resurrection of the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve happen. So first of all, we're like, whoa. Paul is juxtaposing the resurrection of the planet with the resurrection of Adam, and we're recognizing that those seven days of Genesis chapter one. Are the great blueprint. And until that blueprint is fully restored, meaning the cosmos is liberated and resurrected, that God's purposes have not been completed.

And when I'm in class and I'm talking about this and I'm watching the eyes of my undergrads get biggest dishes, what I wind up saying to them is, Hey, team, this plan. Is way bigger than your personal fire insurance. We're resurrecting a cosmos. We're not just getting you and your sorry self into heaven. We're, yeah we're getting back to the original plan. So what Paul is saying and what the larger New Testament is saying, and what Revelation 21 and 22 is saying is that this earth has been, earth is gonna be resurrected just like we are so.

[00:14:51] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:14:52] **Sandy Richter:** we have to ask the question, does the fact that you and I are gonna be resurrected, does that make us disposable? Does that make humanity that is redeemed, disposable? Does that make humanity? That is unredeemed disposable? Am I allowed to let widows and orphans starve if they're not Christians because they're disposable. And the answer from any Christian would be, heck no. Get yourself in there and defend intend God's values. So I'm, what I'm doing is I'm making the argument that this earth, as called Gunton would say. Is there's continuity. Yes, there's transformation, but there's continuity. And since there's continuity, this stuff is not disposable and it's not ours. God's ultimate purposes for this planet is to resurrect it. That is the testimony of the great story from beginning to end, and I, as a steward. Of his creation that will be resurrected. I tend and defend those are the commands.

[00:16:12] **Angie Ward:** Yeah. Well, and so, the earliest Christians, the earliest church, they. They believed that Christ would come any moment. Like they were surprised when a week went by and, two weeks and my, and, and really, but that, I think you're saying that's the mindset we need to have, I mean, in general, first that Christ could come back at any time, but because of that, we need to, like you see some of the vineyard owners who stewardship in and they're saying, take care of this.

[00:16:40] **Sandy Richter:** Yes.

[00:16:40] **Angie Ward:** And

[00:16:41] **Sandy Richter:** Yes.

[00:16:42] **Angie Ward:** well, I'm just gonna sit there and let it do its thing. You have this responsibility because you want it to.

[00:16:48] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[00:16:50] **Angie Ward:** It, when the ultimate, owner comes back, which could be any moment. So we don't

[00:16:54] **Sandy Richter:** Yeah.

[00:16:54] **Angie Ward:** Is that

[00:16:55] **Sandy Richter:** Yeah, I actually love that. And that would make a lovely little journal article. The, yes. Well, because not only is that parable very powerful in the New Testament, but I would argue that parable in the New Testament. Is an intentional illusion to Isaiah chapter five, where my beloved planted a vineyard and he did everything he could to care for it and it didn't produce. And he is talking about Israel, of course. So the amount of this posture of judgment toward a people that. Don't care for a vineyard is pretty severe. And the idea that the vineyard belongs to my beloved, it belongs to Yahweh.

[00:17:43] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:17:44] **Sandy Richter:** And what we have done and we've done it, gosh. We've done it for centuries really, is we have suppressed the messages of stewardship and resurrection in favor of the messages that suit our own consumerism. Of use it up because it's gonna burn. So we've,

[00:18:10] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:18:11] **Sandy Richter:** we haven't read the whole Bible in our posture toward environmental concern as is so typical of the church. And I'm a happy, grateful member of the church. But as is so typical of us, we have read our book through the lens of our personal ideologies and political postures instead of allowing the text to transform our personal ideologies and political postures.

[00:18:43] **Angie Ward:** Which I would say goes back to what you're even talking about in Genesis, the ideal kind of seven day narrative of things in its place. And so the sovereign God has given us these

[00:18:55] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:18:57] **Angie Ward:** but if we don't have him as his God

[00:18:59] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:19:00] **Angie Ward:** then well, these are just kind of

[00:19:01] **Sandy Richter:** Yes.

[00:19:02] **Angie Ward:** Instead of, instead of mandates of our relationship with God and to God and a

[00:19:09] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:19:10] **Angie Ward:** not a

[00:19:10] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:19:11] **Angie Ward:** subservience, but yeah.

[00:19:13] **Sandy Richter:** Well, and what I wind up doing and I could probably be out every weekend addressing these topics, but I, I simply don't have time. But in these settings, and I'm in universities and community groups and yada yada, what I wa what I do with folk is I walk them through the commands that appear in Eden, that appear in Israel, and that appear in the New Testament, and people are usually quite stunned to find out that scripture is as specific as it is about God's expectations that his people deal with. His planet, his native flora and agricultural flora domestic livestock and wild livestock with such a posture of stewardship. And when we think about the fact, especially that most of these laws can be found in the. Deistic legislation. So Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the Covenant Coder, the three great law codes in the Old Testament, every one of them speak a sustainable agriculture, humane, animal husbandry, and care for the wild creature. So what's going on? And especially what's going on when we start putting those law codes in context. These law codes come from Israel's earliest story.

And if we're gonna, put the Covenant code and Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the time periods they claim to be in, we're looking at the Iron one. And we're looking at an age. So for those who don't know, the archeological periods, 1200 to a thousand. So, let's even be more progressive on our dating. And let's push the dating of Deuteronomy down to the seventh century. Let's even push Leviticus down to the fifth century, which I wouldn't personally do, but let's say we do that. These folks are in an era of human civilization where the impact of humanity on the native flora and fauna. Fauna is still com really mild, let's put it that way. To this is pre-industrial revolution. This is pre gunpowder. This is this is still a point in time where having a hunting creature, a bear, a lion within 50 miles of your village was life threatening. Which, welcome to the suburbs. We, we don't have anything like that.

[00:21:54] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:21:55] **Sandy Richter:** Yeah, nothing to compare. And still Israel is being commanded to defend the wild creature and its habitat, and Deuteronomy will come through making the statement that if you don't allow the wild creature, the opportunity to reproduce and protect its population in its native habitat, it will not go well with you in the land. So if the God of Creation is talking to a pre-industrial revolution populace about defending the habitat and reproductive cycle of the wild creature, where does that put us as another people of God who are living in the land and dealing with the impact of human civilization on the wild creature?

[00:22:50] **Angie Ward:** Yeah. Wow. Yeah. That is a complete reframing for what I think myself, certainly for a long time, and what many of us have been taught or even, we thought about it at all.

[00:23:02] **Sandy Richter:** Well, and that business of thought about it at all. That's actually what I wind up saying in my conclusions, that we've lived our lives without a thought for the consequences of our behavior on the garden, and I happen to be a lover of the church. I truly believe that the church with all of its faults and flaws is God's plan for the transformation of. Humanity. So even with our faults and flaws, I'm gonna defend the church to my grave, right? I'm not busy deconstructing here, but what I am saying to the community of faith is you have turned a blind eye toward the impact of your behavior on your relationship with the garden. The church would never turn a blind eye to the impact of our behavior on our relationship with the marginalized. We step up to the plate when it comes to these issues that we can see, but we don't see this one. We don't see this one.

[00:24:12] **Angie Ward:** Well, so let's turn the corner into, what that actually looks like. You talked, earlier in our conversation about proper stewardship or proper creation care. What does that look like from, on me every day walking around campus or my home and my neighborhood to, macro level kind of things?

[00:24:33] **Sandy Richter:** So, what I do at the end of the book is I have a little appendix, which is called resources for the Responsive Christian. And the idea is just what you're saying, what can I do? Yeah. So.

[00:24:49] **Angie Ward:** Yeah. Now I'm convinced. Now

[00:24:51] **Sandy Richter:** Yeah. Excellent. And the first thing that I say to anyone is you need to get educated. You need to find out what the impact of your behavior is and getting educated. Typically a great first step, let's put it that way. A great first step is. Purchasing a subscription to one of the classic magazines, right? And it could be an online magazine as opposed to the paper that comes to your home. So a group like the Sierra Club or the Nature Conservancy, these are two that I'm always willing to support. They do very good work. They are internationally consolidated now. Will a Christian agree with everything that comes through in those magazines? Absolutely not. I don't agree with everything that comes through in good Housekeeping, right. But there's still a lot of great information going on in there. So the first thing I would say is get educated. Hey, you can start with my book if you want to.

[00:25:53] **Angie Ward:** That's right.

[00:25:53] **Sandy Richter:** But a little subscription, again, Sierra Club, nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, even Humane Society, inventors of Wildlife, they're all out there. Puts a little bit of cash in their pocket, which means I put my money where my mouth is and I'm busy getting educated. So that is a great place to start. We happen to live in a democracy, so as you get informed beginning to vote with an informed conscience is also incredibly helpful because the problem of environmentalism is as the ethic, ethicists would say, it's one of those wicked problems, right? It's way bigger than me. And it takes systemic change. So it's not just gonna be you and I who are able to make these changes. It's gonna need to be bigger than that. The other great news about the United States of America is we're capitalists. Yes, we are. And being capitalists, our vote with our personal finances is probably as powerful as our vote in the ballot box.

[00:27:02] **Angie Ward:** Well, and that's a, I mean, when you read it, most books about stewardship start with our

[00:27:07] **Sandy Richter:** Good point.

[00:27:08] **Angie Ward:** or are limited, I would say, to our finances, but certainly it's a primary area for

[00:27:13] **Sandy Richter:** Yeah.

[00:27:14] **Angie Ward:** and stewardship.

[00:27:15] **Sandy Richter:** the typical person is gonna think that their, the impact of their behavior is gonna make no difference. Why even bother? But then I think back, and you might remember this, do you remember the compa, the campaign for responsible tuna phishing? Okay. And what was happening is the death nets as the environmentalists would call them, these, this massive netting devices behind. Tuna fishing were capturing as many dolphins as they were tuna. And although the fishermen might be responsible to try to haul the dolphins out of the nets after they'd secured the tuna, reality is dolphins are mammals, their air breathers, and they would've drowned by the time the nets were pulled in. So what happened in our grocery stores, is the environmentalists became aware of what was going on. They put out a campaign for responsible tuna fishing, and all of the cans of tuna either had a stamp on them saying this was safe dolphin fishing, where they didn't have a stamp on them.

[00:28:34] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:28:34] **Sandy Richter:** There. It's, yep.

[00:28:35] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:28:36] **Sandy Richter:** so you and I stopped buying the tuna that didn't have the stamp. And because you and I stopped buying that tuna, it forced the industry to get responsible. So our personal purchases, especially in our particular society, make a big difference. So what are the two big issues right now? My good friends in the Nature Conservancy would say the two big issues are plastic and petroleum. Plastic and petroleum. So for the average consumer to do everything they can to reduce the amount of plastic they use and to reduce the amount of petroleum they use they're having a ripple effect through the entire environmental problem. One aspect of that ripple effect is the decrease of the use of fossil fuels, which is enormous because that involves both the destruction. Of habitat due to extraction of fossil fuels, the pollution that comes from the transportation of fossil fuels and the enormous impact of the use of fossil fuels. So that has. A big ripple effect, plastic also a petroleum product, but your listeners might not be aware that at this very moment we have an island of plastic bound trash in the North Pacific that is twice the size of Texas.

We have another island of plastic tracks trash in the Northern Atlantic. It is the size of Texas, the Indian Ocean, all the great currents of this planet. We are choking out, starving out all of the creatures that live in our oceans. And because fishing of our oceans is largely unregulated because no one owns the ocean. So again, think consumerism. No one owns the ocean. No one can protect the ocean. So exploitation of wildlife combined with irresponsible use of plastic and a thousand other toxins were, oh my gosh, 70% of 70% of predator fish in the oceans are already extinct. And that extinction cycle began in 1970. This is not ancient history. We're in serious trouble on this planet. So individuals buy organic and recycled as often as you can. Push the industries that direction, reduce your own use of petroleum and plastic, start paying

attention to humane animal husbandry. 95% of every, item of animal flesh that comes to market in the United States of America has been raised on an industrial farm. And as your listeners delve into my book or the other literature on this topic, they will be appalled at how the typical creature is raised, slaughtered, and transported for consumption. It's, it is. Disgusting and the industry is working very hard to make sure that you and I don't know about it.

[00:32:10] **Angie Ward:** Well, that is that's the thought that's been continuing through my head as you've been saying all these different things, like,

[00:32:16] **Sandy Richter:** Why don't I know this? Yeah.

[00:32:18] **Angie Ward:** I, well, I don't know. And honestly, sometimes I don't want it feels like, man, this is a lot of, or I haven't wanted to know. This is, it's like, this sounds like this is a lot of like, sometimes you have children and you realize when the children realize that a chicken nugget

[00:32:32] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:33] **Angie Ward:** chicken. Right. And so there's a lot that it's, I think it's just more shamefully more convenient to turn a blind eye and say, well, but this is the wonders of, modern whatever. Not whether it is

[00:32:46] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:47] **Angie Ward:** you know,

[00:32:47] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:47] **Angie Ward:** it's convenient. I just don't wanna think about that stuff. So, as we kind of start to wrap this up, what would be your kind but passionate admonition. To that type of mindset, which

[00:33:02] **Sandy Richter:** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:03] **Angie Ward:** of before. Like I, we've just never been taught that. What's

[00:33:06] **Sandy Richter:** Right.

[00:33:06] **Angie Ward:** think about, first of all, but then it's like, that's just a, just feels like a lot of work.

[00:33:10] **Sandy Richter:** It is a lot of work.

[00:33:12] **Angie Ward:** But, and, but going back to your, why you're so passionate about it as a Christian, I hear you saying we

[00:33:18] **Sandy Richter:** Yes. Yes. We.

[00:33:20] **Angie Ward:** but say whatever you wanna tell me in your own

[00:33:22] **Sandy Richter:** Yeah, I think that we, the church are passionately aware of the fact that we are a countercultural movement, that we are intended to be displaying to the world what the citizenry of heaven looks like, not the citizenry. Of Colorado, Indiana or California looks like right. We are supposed to be to quote the old group, glad lights on the rim of the water giving light in a storm, sea of hate. That's who we are. And our lives are supposed to embody the transformation of the gospel so that the unbeliever gets a chance to catch a glimpse. Of what the kingdom looks like and to be courted, wooed into citizenry in that kingdom. Well, if we are not living our countercultural lives, what hope does the unbeliever have? And the answer is a big zero. If we are not living that lifestyle. So this is a topic that we have been, as you said, kind of benignly, ignorant of. We have a generation coming up behind us who is not benignly ignorant, and they are turning to their fathers and forefathers and saying, where are you? On this topic this planet is dying and you've done nothing. Where is the community of Christ in this mix? I, I think there is an enormous evangelistic impulse behind this, but it's the evangelistic impulse of simply living what we believe and what do we believe.

[00:35:06] **Angie Ward:** Yeah.

[00:35:06] **Sandy Richter:** That the Lord God Almighty is the creator of heaven and earth, and that heaven and earth are actually his possession. He called the stars forth and gave each of them names. I'm thinking of Job and we, the community of Christ have lived our lives as though that isn't true. As though that isn't true. As we close this conversation down, I would love to read for your audience a little quotation that's coming from Gus Beth. And if there are any environmentalists listening, they're like, oh, yeah, I know about him. He was the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality all the way back under Jimmy Carter. And then lived his life since then as a complete insider in the environmental world. He is every inch a scientist every in, every inch environmentalist and a mover in Shaker as well. So as he came to his retirement, they were interviewing him and asking him what he thought of his life's work. And listen to this, you're gonna love this. He made the statement, I used to think. That the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse in climate change. I thought that 30 years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy.

And to deal with these, we need a cultural and spiritual transformation and we scientists, we don't know how to do that. I don't know about you, but when I hear that quote, the first thing that comes to my mind is put me in coach. Because we the church, we totally know what to do with that. We've lived our lives doing that, and I'll get asked on podcasts all the time, Sandy Richter, what is your great idea? what's your big idea and my big idea. Is to awaken a sleeping giant every hospital orphanage rescue mission on this planet, maybe not every, I might be overstating, has the word saint. Jesus Cross church or Christian in it because we know how to step into the gap. We know how to go down swinging against impossible odds, and we win because we are the leaven in the lump. We're the mustard seed, the garden, we're the wheat among the tears. I wanna see the church step up on this topic and I wanna see it change the world. And if we don't change the world. Heck I'm gonna go down swinging all the same. So those would be my final words.

[00:38:00] **Angie Ward:** Yeah. Wow. Thank you. Thank you so much. Yes, thank you for this informative, insightful, challenging, convicting conversation. Thank you for your passion and the role you're playing in the kingdom. Calling us to stewardship, discipleship it's been great to have you here

[00:38:18] **Sandy Richter:** Angie, it's been great to be here. Yeah,

[00:38:20] **Angie Ward:** next time we can chat. Thank you so much blessings on you

[00:38:24] **Sandy Richter:** thank you very, very much. It's been lovely to be here. Thank you. Thank.

[00:38:27] **Angie Ward:** friends. Thanks for choosing to spend time with us. We are grateful for your interests, support, and prayers. Until next time more, the Lord bless you. Take care.