

The Creation/Cultural Mandate

Genesis 1:28 (CSB) - God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28 (ESV) - And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) - The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Glossary¹

Create: to bring into existence

Cultural: cultivation, tillage | the customary beliefs, social norms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group | to improve by labor, care, or study

Fill: to make full

God: The one true and living being who created all things and rules over the Universe as the Sovereign.

Mandate: an authoritative command

Multiply: increase in number

Rule: the exercise of authority or control

Subdue: to conquer and bring into subjection | to bring under cultivation – cultivate

ESV Study Bible

1:28 As God had blessed the sea and sky creatures (v. 22), so too He blesses humanity. **Be fruitful and multiply.** This theme recurs throughout Genesis in association with divine blessing (see 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4) and serves as the basis of the biblical view that raising faithful children is a part of God’s creation plan for mankind. God’s creation plan is that the whole earth should be populated by those who know Him and who serve wisely as His vice-regents or representatives. **subdue it and have dominion.** The term “subdue” (Hb. *kabash*) elsewhere means to bring a people or a land into subjection so that it will yield service to the one subduing it (Num 32:22, 29). Here the idea is that the man and woman are to make the earth’s resources beneficial for themselves, which implies that they would investigate and develop the earth’s resources to make them useful for human beings generally. This command provides a foundation for wise scientific and technological development; the evil uses to which people have put their dominion come as a result of Genesis 3. **over every living thing.** As God’s representatives, human beings are to rule over every living thing on the earth. These commands are not, however, a mandate to exploit the earth and its creatures to satisfy human greed, for the fact that Adam and Eve were “in the image of God” (1:27) implies God’s expectation that human beings will use the earth wisely and govern it with the same sense of responsibility and care that God has toward the whole of His creation.²

NET Bible

Subdue: The general meaning of the verb appears to be “to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage.” In Gen 1:28 one might paraphrase it as follows: “harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit.” In an ancient Israelite context, this would suggest cultivating its fields, mining its mineral riches, using its trees for construction, and domesticating its animals.³

The Creation/Cultural Mandate

This mandate has two parts: **Procreate and Cultivate**

The creation/cultural mandate is the command from God, the Creator, to humanity to procreate with sufficient numbers to fill the earth with image-bearers of God who cultivate and conquer (subdue) the earth’s natural resources and righteously rule over the whole world to God’s glory and the betterment of society.

¹ Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996).

² Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 51–52.

³ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).