

**Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)**

Deuteronomy 7:22

Carrying Capacity

And the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.

They might have been Israel's worst enemies but they were good for something. I'm talking about the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, *seven nations greater and mightier than God's chosen people* (Deuteronomy 7:1).

Historically speaking, the seven nations shared in some noteworthy achievements. From them came improvements in iron technology, development of written languages, and expansion of international trade for that region (Saggs, 1989). As intelligent people groups, management of their surroundings was likely an important survival requirement. For better or worse, their affect on the habitat that sustained wild animals was apparent.

Perhaps it was their impact on habitat, or their hunting activity, or their lifestyle of living. In any case, the beasts of the field would multiply rapidly if these nations were suddenly taken out of the picture. Therefore, God slowly but surely delivered the nations over to Israel, thus keeping in check the wildlife population (Deuteronomy 7:23). He is the great Creator, our Heavenly Father and Savior, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and now we see that He is the Divine Conservationist!

As a hunter safety instructor, one of the things I teach students is a biological phenomenon called carrying capacity. Basically, this is the number of wildlife that habitat can sustain with available food, water, shelter, and space. Surplus wildlife die or move. A healthy population of wildlife is in balance with the habitat (North Central Hunter Education Manual, 1995).

From the beginning, God gave humans the command, "*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*" (Genesis 1:28). He wants us to enjoy the harvest from the ground, timber from the forest, water from the seas, minerals from the earth, and meat from animals. If any of these are out of balance with the human population, disaster is certain. Biblically speaking, all these things are placed in our care. We are divinely appointed to practice conservation.

How we do that has an impact on the carrying capacity of wildlife habitat. I think I can safely say without reservation that hunters and fisherman – really, all outdoorsmen in combination – make up the largest group of dedicated conservationists in the world. We support overall conservation efforts with our money, talents, time, convictions, and volunteerism. All of our efforts help keep the carrying capacity for any habitat in its ideal state.

The days are done when people conquer other people in violent ways. It still happens and when it does good nations step in to stop it. But the days are not done when wildlife and habitat management are bygone. God's command in Genesis 1:28 is still valid. He still expects men to practice good conservation techniques as He would, and did, and does. And when bad practices occur, it is our duty as responsible outdoorsmen to step in and change it.

It's not just a measure of our outdoorsmanship. It's a measure of the carrying capacity of Christian men immersed in the habitat of God's word.

Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Deuteronomy 7:22
Carrying Capacity

HOOK

1. In what area of conservation are you actively involved? If none, what area would you choose?

2. Name an item that you recycle or should recycle. What is the impact of not recycling?

3. Think of the habitat you frequently venture into. List all the wildlife that lives there.

LINE

Carrying capacity is the number of wildlife that habitat can sustain with available food, water, shelter, and space. A healthy population of wildlife is in balance with the habitat.

God wants us to enjoy all natural resources. If anything is out of balance with the human population, disaster is certain. Biblically speaking, all natural resources are placed in our care. We are divinely appointed to practice conservation. How we do that has an impact on carrying capacity.

The days are done when people conquer other people in violent ways. It still happens and when it does good nations step in to stop it. But the days are not done when wildlife and habitat management are bygone. God still expects men to practice good conservation techniques as He would, and did, and does. And when bad practices occur, it is our duty as responsible outdoorsmen to step in and change it.

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In your view, what is the Biblical mandate for practicing conservation? Why is this important?

Why do you think God is concerned with the carrying capacity of habitat? What are you doing in conservation that pleases God? Or what can you do, or do better?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: carrying capacity natural resources conservation
