# NATURE ISN'T ALWAYS NICE

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Life isn't all lovely sunsets and we need a theology that can handle reality as it is, rather than how we wish it was.
**Category:** Observations

If you've been following this blog for a while, you will know that I love the natural world. I love being outdoors, especially in wild country and - having worked as a biologist - I am fascinated by plants and animals and how they function and interact.

I'm getting really excited at the thought of the curlews returning to our hills in the next week or two and I'll get very sloppy when the new born lambs start appearing. However, despite this, I'm not particularly sentimental about nature. The thing is, it can be pretty brutal. Watching a barn owl hunt in the evening is one of the most wonderful sights you can see in the UK, unless you are the vole whose life ends in a squeak, a crunch and the shock of owl talons. Predators live by killing and eating other animals and there are some parasites around that do things that are far too gruesome for a polite blog on a Monday morning.

So why am I going on about this?

Fairly regularly, on social media, I will see photographs of a sunset or some other beautiful scene accompanied by lots of comments about how good and wonderful God is to have created something so amazing. Now, I'm as keen on a good sunset as anyone else and I do think that they show something of God's greatness. However, if we only look at the nice bits of nature, we aren't telling the full story.

We need a theology and an understanding of God that not only embraces beautiful sunsets, but which can handle voles having their guts ripped out by the razor sharp bill of a barn owl. That doesn't sound so nice, does it?

There are a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, if our theology is only limited to the good things, we will have no answer to human suffering when we come face to face with it. Life isn't all hearts and flowers and as Christians we have to weep with those who weep. To do so authentically means that we need to have an understanding of how horrible things can happen in a creation ruled over by a loving God.

Secondly, the Bible does not shy away from these difficult questions and nor should we. On one level, the fall narrative in Genesis 3 provides an easy answer to the question of why nasty things happen. However, books such as Job, Psalms and Lamentations show that even within the framework of the fall there are hard questions to be faced. Providing easy answers to people who are suffering generally doesn't help. This is particularly important for cross-cultural, mission partners

coming from the West. We have worked hard to either eliminate or ignore suffering and this means that we are ill equipped to address the issues that many people face as part of their daily existence.

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