

Brave Church/Hard Topics, 3/1/2023: Why Are So Many Christians Lukewarm about Climate Change?

This is the chat log of the discussion. Names and identifiable information have been removed for privacy.

References to slides for this session can be found in the *BC-HT Climate change conversations 3-1-23.pdf* document linked [Brave Church-Hard Topics web page](#).

Additional information added after the discussion are identified with “NOTE:”

Part 1: Background on climate change, causes, impacts, public perceptions (slides 1-8)

NOTE: Slide 8 (Global Warming’s Six Americas Supplement) was added to describe what each category represents

Discussion Questions 1 (slide 9):

Where do you see yourself in the “Six Americas of Global Warming?”

Where does climate change rank among the things you care or are concerned about? Why?

Do you think the impacts of climate change have a direct impact on your life?

One important impact on health is that the warmer winters allow funguses, viruses, and bugs are not being killed during the winter and grow quickly in the spring.

Alarmed, but curious: Why are we getting such terrible weather with such small changes? We’ve had greater swings in temperature on earth (example: dinosaur fossils have been found near the North Pole)

During the days of dinosaurs, the North Pole wasn't in the same place because of continental drift.

Where we're living now is a much steeper incline. That change in temperature is enough to cause icecaps and glaciers to melt.

Look at the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and go back hundreds and thousands of years and chart that, you see rises and falls over eons. In the modern era that chart is going nothing but skyward. The percentage of carbon in the air is what is scaring scientists.

Alarmed: Got interested more after retiring and joining the master gardeners program. He wrote a piece on the carbon situation.

Al Gore tried to convince us years ago that climate change is real. About 75% of us now think it is real.

Perception from working with youth: they have a high level of concern, almost debilitating at times, but also inspiring and empowering as well.

Alarmed in thinking about it: If I was an 1-issue voter, environment/climate change would be it. We can’t wait to reform. At the same time, it is also important to ask ‘do I always live like that?’ not just what we think, but what do we do about it

The question is not just what we think but how are we living out of this despair?

How much are we willing to trade? What are we willing to do about it?

Why did we wait so long? When I see how much paper I try to recycle, why weren't we doing this 40 years ago?

There are health consequences. I am not giving up my gas stove, but it impacts my breathing. I know I'm not doing enough.

It is not too hard to do the things we can do on an individual basis. Small changes can lead to serious changes.

Alarmed, leaning toward cautious – some due to exposure. Taking it seriously is part of my everyday life because of my family values and working with the government. Not just a recent thing. Reading up on back to the earth things in HS, let to wanting to be an energy engineer.

As meteorologist – v. small changes will have major impacts on global oscillations of patterns. Humans stink at planning ahead when it doesn't have anything to do with ourselves. We tend to look at the more immediate things. The technologies that we needed early on and the cost kept us from doing this earlier.

On the scale I am **not alarmed but very concerned**. I see more problems as being more important-- especially the population boom. This is also contributing to where we are - they are intertwined. A lot of populations are coastal.

Question--what is your professional opinion on artificial efforts to seed the sky to artificially cool down temperatures?

Answer – China tried this. Mother Nature does just fine. When we try to artificially insert substance into the atmosphere, it is a bad idea. We must understand the second and third level effects of it. When we start messing with Mother Nature, we mess up.

What about methane? Especially from uncapped wells.

Methane has been a problem. I do not know the levels. Methane gas also affects the ozone, levels are back to pre-1970s. A good thing.

Carbon dioxide levels are high now.

NOTE: Here's a breakdown of greenhouse gases, their sources, and ways to reduce emissions: [Overview of Greenhouse Gases](#)

US emissions in 2020 consisted of carbon dioxide (79%), methane (11%), nitrous oxide (7%), and fluorinated gases (3%). Pound-for-pound, the comparative impact of methane is 25 times greater than that of carbon dioxide.

Rise in sea levels. In Portsmouth, NH you could drive along the coastal road, you could see the ocean beyond. You can no longer do that because the ocean now breaks over the boulders put in place.

Part 2: Christian Responses (slides 10-11)

Discussion Questions 2 (slide 12):

Do you think Christians have a critical role/calling to play in addressing climate change? Why or why not?

How well do you think Christians are fulfilling that role/calling?

Think we should work on it. It is our planet.

Some evangelicals think if they promote the end, they can call the end. This is them contributing to the problem.

It seems that evangelicals think they can bring about the end times. We don't have that call to make. If they don't participate, they're contributing to problem.

Struggle with this – went to a Baptist middle school that taught creationism. As a 12 yo, I didn't understand why people who were educated, had scientific evidence were trumped by people who want to put it off. As a scientist, I don't see a big conspiracy to turn these off. Subscribe to belief we are definitely meant to be stewards of this earth. It is our responsibility look after it and care for it. Believe the earth was put in motion by God; we were given the opportunity to understand so we can shepherd, protect the environment.

Think we have a role/calling as Christians. Why limit it to Christians? Whether they are Christian or no religion at all, should be something that holds up to us as a responsibility.

We don't have a ton of young people going to church, but they are very concerned.

A firm believer in the stewardship role. Blew it in the Garden of Eden and we have been blowing it for a very long time. We need to take a hand in what is going on in the world!!

Agree that we should be steward of earth, fighting climate change. Gets lost in economics, practicality of everyday life. Ex: going from gas car to hybrid. What do I need to give up?

What are the day to day implications and what things do I need to give up?

Is climate change the result and the punishment for our bad behavior?

One thing that informs evangelical thinking is that heaven is above and in a different realm, and in the long run the earth is irrelevant. Not really a biblical idea at all. NT Wright wrote in Surprised by Hope the passage about believers being raised up is a metaphorical welcoming party to welcome Jesus back to earth. We're here for the duration.

We have a responsibility to view this earth as a holy place that Jesus wants to return to.

The youth are overwhelming concerned about climate change and that something needs to be done. What kind of witness are we giving to the younger generation?

It is common in the Muslim community to think that large families need not be a cause for concern.

If you look at the global population it is going up rapidly, but first world countries are not growing like that. The Heat Belt area, they have the highest population replacement rates. It is associated with women's education levels and empowerment levels.

The most efficient thing to do is to educate women. So that they have more control of their lives. Women want healthy children.

Did God bring on the Black Plague to wipe up a large part of the population, taking centuries to bring the numbers back to the pre-plague levels?

Here's a recent WAPO article on geoengineering [relating back to earlier discussion on seeding the sky]:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/02/27/geoengineering-security-war/>

Part 3: Taking Action/Talking About Climate Change (Slides 13-16)

Discussion Questions 3 (Slide 17):

What are the things that matter most to you? Your family? Your community?

What connections do you see between the things that matter to you and climate change?

What actions are you willing to take to address the impacts of climate change?

NOTE: These questions can be used to prepare to have discussions about climate change. The specifics may change with the person(s) you are talking to.

The “Fear of...” list (Slide 14) are the things you see when you talk about racial bias or Christian nationalism. Loss of my controlling the world.

To really make a difference, we need a major systemic change – have to be willing to vote for or push for something like that.

The reason ozone is better is that a decade ago, FDA forced changes to inhalers.

It was much broader than medications: it also included aerosol cans, AC coolants. But the point is, it took systemic change to make an impact.

In Fairfax County we are concerned about our taxes. FC set up places to recycle products and ultimately lowers our taxes.

There’s always a way in to talk to people.

All of those fears on the chart condemned Jesus to crucifixion.

As technology changes, there is always a trade-off. Hydroelectric power requires abundant water. Solar power takes up land.

The slight increase in temperatures is causing the melting we’re seeing in the Arctic and Antarctic.

Sometimes feel like a hypocrite when it comes to climate change (more likely concerned than alarmed). Have a family beach house. If concerned about climate change, why have a beach house.

Next Week:

We’ll look more into things we can do, with an emphasis on addressing the social justice aspects of climate change.