

Science and Christianity: Friends or Foes?

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Six Degrees of Separation: Creation Care in a Changing World

I. Introduction

Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise. (Aldo Leopold, "A Sand County Almanac")

Nonscientists generally view major environmental issues as problems of science and technology, not as problems of the human condition. We must understand that Christianity provides answers central to the resolution of these issues. Environmental problems are, fundamentally, sin problems.

II. The Nature of Environmental Degradation

A. A litany of problems

Humanity's ecological footprint is now 25% greater than the size of the Earth.

B. The perfect storm

1. Population
2. Prosperity
3. Poverty

III. A Theology of Creation Care

Concern about the environment is very much a Christian activity.

A proper understanding and practice of creation care holds forth hope for the future.

Concern for God's creation is not only a *legitimate* Christian concern, but one that is *fundamental* for building a proper view of *who* God is - as both creator and redeemer - and *what* He has calls us to do in building His kingdom on Earth.

A. God as Creator

Gen. 1:31

Rev. 4:10, 11

Ps. 104

Implications for proper understanding of God as Creator:

1. To know Him as Creator means to *worship* Him as Creator.
2. To know Him as Creator means to *celebrate and care for* His creation.

B. God as Redeemer

The New Testament is clear that the redemption and reconciliation of Christ extend not only to humans, but to "all things" - the entire universe, including the natural world.

Col. 1:19,20, 23

Eph. 1:9,10

Acts 3:19-21

Implications for proper understanding of Christ as Redeemer:

1. To know Him as Redeemer means to love that which He loves.
2. To know Him as Redeemer means to participate in His full work of redemption/ reconciliation.

IV. Focus on Climate Change

Global climate change is arguably the most serious environmental threat faced by humankind. It is real, it is largely human-caused, it is imminent, and it is potentially catastrophic.

Evangelical Climate Change Initiative, 2006 (www.christiansandclimate.org):

1. Human-induced climate change is real.
2. The consequences of climate change will be significant, and will hit the poor the hardest.
3. Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem.
4. The need to act now is urgent. Governments, businesses, churches, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing climate change starting now.

V. Get Real: Lessons for Our Lives

A. Appreciate

B. Recognize

C. Transform

Romans 8:19-21

Ways You Can Help Stop Global Warming:¹

At Home

- Weatherize your home to conserve energy. Check to see if your utility or your local or state government offers an incentive or rebate program to help you weatherize your home.
- Get a home energy audit. Take advantage of the free home energy audits offered by many utilities.
- Purchase and install compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Look for the Energy Star label when buying new appliances. These items may cost a bit more initially, but the energy savings will pay back the extra investment within a couple of years.
- Offset your carbon footprint (emissions). See: carbonfund.org
- Unplug a freezer. One of the quickest ways to reduce your global warming impact is to unplug the extra refrigerator or freezer you rarely use.
- Buy good wood. When buying wood products, check for labels that indicate the source of the timber. Supporting forests that are managed in a sustainable fashion makes sense for biodiversity, and it may make sense for the climate too. Forests that are well managed are more likely to store carbon effectively because more trees are left standing and carbon-storing soils are less disturbed.
- Use low-flow faucets in your showers and sinks.
- Replace toilets with water-saving lavatories.
- Lower the temperature on your hot water tank to 120 degrees.
- Plant trees strategically to create shade for your house to reduce the need for air conditioning. Join the Arbor Day Foundation for \$10 and they will send you 10 free trees (www.arborday.org).
- Plant plants that require little to no watering.
- Use a composting lawnmower. Composting yard waste on site reduces the waste stream sent to your community's landfill, and landfills generate a potent gas called "methane" that adds to global warming.
- Using a push mower instead of a power mower will reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
- Compost kitchen and yard plant waste.
- Recycle everything possible. Set it up so it's convenient.
- Buy food and other products with reusable or recyclable packaging, or reduced packaging. Do not buy goods that are individually packaged, instead buy bulk.
- Buy products made of recycled content, such as recycled paper for your computer printer.
- Adjust your thermostat. Turn it down 3 degrees in the winter and up 3 degrees in the summer. Dress warmer or cooler to adapt.

¹ Adapted from the following websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_on_climate_change,

http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/solutions/ten-personal-solutions.html ,

<http://www.christiansandclimate.org/action>

- Buy a programmable thermostat. Automatically lower your monthly energy bill by giving your heat and air conditioning a break while you are asleep or out.
- Check furnace filter monthly and replace as needed to maintain furnace efficiency.
- Turn your lights, computer, TV, and other electronics off overnight. A standard monitor left on overnight uses enough energy to print 5,300 copies.
- Drive 15 miles less each week. Shrink your gas costs and your waistline by walking, biking and taking public transportation.
- Avoid idling your car. Give your engine and the climate a break by turning off your car when you aren't moving for more than a few minutes.
- Wash clothes in cold or warm, rather than hot, water.
- Dry clothes on a clothesline instead of in a dryer.
- Clean the clothes dryer lint trap after each load. Dry faster and save money.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.
- Cover your water heater and water pipes with a fire-safe insulator.
- Use shades and drapes to block out direct sun during the day.
- Cook outside or with a microwave oven instead of a stove. Save money and improve comfort.
- Use a whole house fan, room fans or ceiling fans instead of air conditioning.

On the Road

- Select a home located close to your job to reduce your travel distance and time.
- Organize your life so that it is easier and more desirable to walk, bike, car pool and use public transportation.
- If you own more than one vehicle, use the less fuel-efficient one only when you can fill it with passengers. Driving a full minivan may be kinder to the environment than two midsize cars. Whenever possible, join a carpool or take mass transit.
- When a new passenger vehicle is required, purchase the most fuel efficient and least polluting vehicle that truly meets your needs. Consider a hybrid.
- Keep your car's engine tuned up, the tires properly inflated, and don't carry weight unnecessarily in the car (e.g., using the trunk for storage). All save gas.
- When running errands, combine trips so that you are not using your car for single-purpose trips.

Miscellaneous

- Support businesses that are reducing their global warming pollution by your investments and purchases.
- If you are a business leader, encourage your employees to use public transportation and participate in ride-share programs, avoid subsidizing parking, and purchase fuel-efficient business vehicles. Check to see if your city offers discounts for your employees to take public transportation. Invest in making your building and appliances energy efficient. Check to see if your city and/or state offer incentives or rebates for energy efficient upgrades in your workplace.