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How Green Should We Be?

What role should creation
care play in our lives?



How Green Should We Be?



What role should creation care play in our lives?

Click on an article you'd like to read:

3 INTRODUCTION

Beyond the Controversies

By Kelli B. Trujillo

6 LEADERS GUIDE

How to use "How Green Should We Be?" for a group study.

7 CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIONISTS

The earth is not our home, so should believers actively try to preserve it?

By Nancy Ortberg

12 WOMEN IN THE WILD

How five women encountered God during a transforming week in nature.

By Nicole Phinney

23 ENVIRONMENTAL WAGER

Should we be cool toward global warming?

By Andy Crouch

28 SECOND COMING ECOLOGY

We care for the environment precisely because God will create a new earth.

By David Neff

41 GOING GREEN

These evangelical leaders have become champions for the environment.

By Jocelyn C. Green

49 IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

How's a Christian to respond to the hot-button controversies about the environment?

By Holly Vicente Robaina

55 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books to help you further.

Introduction

Beyond the Controversies

By Kelli B. Trujillo



A cool breeze. A lilting birdsong. The rustle of leaves.

There's just something about time in nature that draws my soul to God. In those moments when I can set aside my to-do list, get away from all my appliances and electronic gadgets, and just look at the clouds, I'm reminded of how big, beautiful, and truly awe-inspiring God is. It seems easier to pray. . . easier to listen . . . easier to trust. I think David had some of these same thoughts in mind when he wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1).





How Green Should We Be? Beyond the Controversies

I remember being taught not to litter as a child. The reason was so straightforward: it messes up the great world God made. If only things were as simple as "not littering" today! Instead we're faced with mind-numbing questions and controversies: global warming, pollution, species endangerment and extinction, excessive waste, and more. Add to that endless political wrangling, a culture bent on consumerism, and New-Age and evolutionary beliefs woven into the environmental movement, and it's easy to see why many Christians feel overwhelmed, confused, and even depressed about the issue of the environment.

How green should we be?

These articles begin with author and speaker Nancy Ortberg's thoughtful response to a basic question: *Should* Christians try to preserve and care for the earth? Ortberg's answer highlights an incontrovertible truth that also runs through the second article: The created world is a powerful avenue through which God reveals himself to us today.

Two articles by Andy Crouch and David Neff then tease out some of the issues that complicate this topic for many evangelicals. Crouch discusses the controversy over global warming that has divided many evangelicals. Neff examines the end-times belief that this planet is destined to go downhill and the interplay between that belief with our perspective on environmental care.





How Green Should We Be? Beyond the Controversies

This download ends with some powerful examples of how Christians like you can respond to the truths and challenges wrapped up in the issue of creation care. In "Going Green" you'll hear the story of a pastor who challenged his church to care for creation; and in "It's Not Easy Being Green," you'll see how Holly Vicente Robaina cuts through the controversies and gets at the heart of what creation care can look like for a woman today.

So let's strip away all the complications of politics and stereotypes for a moment and explore this issue together. Regardless of your right-ness or left-ness or your red-ness or blue-ness, we can all agree upon this central truth: God created a marvelously rich and beautiful world that is indeed "very good" (Genesis 1:31). We honor him by gratefully caring for it.

Grace,

Kelli B. Trujillo
Managing Editor, KYRIA downloads,
Christianity Today International



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Leader's Guide

How to use “How Green Should We Be?” for a group study



“How Green Should We Be?” can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.
2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.
3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.
4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.
5. When working through the “Reflect” questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It’s important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.
6. End the session in prayer.





Christian Conservationists

The earth is not our home, so should believers actively try to preserve it?

By Nancy Ortberg

Q: *The earth is not our home, so should believers actively try to preserve it?*

A: There are some things for which words cannot do justice—sights, smells, and sounds that make the heart come alive, that renew our passions, and that whisper to us of the presence of a good God.

On the southern route into Yosemite National Park, the road winds through a tunnel of trees before rounding a bend and giving way to a view known as Inspiration Point. There, just beyond the old stagecoach stop of Wawona, cars pull over to the side and people emerge to gaze silently at the vista, a majestic sweep of the valley





How Green Should We Be?

Christian Conservationists

with views of El Capitan, Bridal Veil Falls, and Half Dome. It's awe-inspiring.

Just south of Carmel, California, Highway 1 winds down the spine of our country's west coast in one of the most beautiful drives in the world, the Big Sur. People come here from all over the world to see where the Pacific Ocean crashes into the sheer cliffs of the Santa Lucia Mountains.

I could fill this page with descriptions of magnificent sights and experiences in our natural world. There's so much beauty, and God's glory is in all of it. Romans 1:20 tells us creation reflects God's invisible qualities, and that God has been "clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." Psalm 19 tells us the earth proclaims the glory of God and the work of his hands. When we preserve creation, we preserve a form of God's testimony to us—evidence for seekers and spiritual formation for believers.

But this is only one of many reasons conservation of natural resources is important from a Christian perspective. When we take action to protect the earth God gave us, we also serve the poor, the importance of which is discussed throughout the Bible. Environmental decay results in dirty air, toxic water, soil erosion, and the depletion of species, all of which impact poor people first and hardest.

And then there's the simple command God gave. In Genesis 2, the refrain "it was good" follows God's creation of sunlight and stars, willow trees and orchids,





How Green Should We Be?

Christian Conservationists

red-winged blackbirds and white-tailed deer.

What God created is a gift to us, and in verse 15 he commands us to take care of it. The Fall made that directive more difficult, but there's been no release from it.

Romans 8:19–22 tells us creation groans and waits to be liberated from its bondage to decay, and Hosea 4 paints the picture of the direct impact our sins have on creation: "The land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying."

It's true that environmental issues are often associated with liberal politics of the sort many Christians oppose. But this doesn't have to be the case. Christians can, and perhaps should, be at the forefront of efforts to preserve God's creation. Perhaps just like Jesus' resurrected body was recognizable but new, the new heaven and new earth promised to us (2 Peter 3:13) is from the template of this earth we now know.

So recycle! And do it with your children, teaching the next generation to value God's creation along the way. Turn off the lights when you leave a room. Consider buying a fuel-efficient car. Research and vote in ways that support environmental causes and are in line with biblical values. For more ideas about how you can make a difference, check out the resources listed below.





How Green Should We Be? Christian Conservationists

And the next time you witness a sight that makes your heart come alive, that renews your passion, that whispers to you of the presence of a good God—remember that God created what you're looking at in order for you to have just such a response.

Resources

Organizations:

Target Earth

www.targetearth.org

Evangelical Environmental Network

www.creationcare.org

Restoring Eden

www.restoringeden.org

Bible studies:

Christians and the Environment

<http://store.yahoo.com/biblestudies/chanden.html>

Source of All Beauty

<http://store.yahoo.com/biblestudies/sourofallbea.html>

Creation Care

<http://biblestudies.stores.yahoo.net/creationcare.html>

Nancy Ortberg is a church leadership consultant and popular speaker. Formerly a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, she now lives in California with her husband, John. The couple has three children, Laura, Mallory, and John. This article first appeared in the March/April 2006 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN magazine.





Reflect

- *Rather than address the controversies often stirred up by the issue of environmentalism or "creation care," Nancy Ortberg begins her response by naming awe-inspiring sights she's seen in nature. What beautiful things have you seen or experienced in nature? What particular sights or sounds stand out in your memory? In what ways do your experiences or memories relate to your own thoughts about creation care?*
- *Read God's commands to Adam and Eve in **Genesis 1:28 and 2:15**. The first passage is often cited as an argument for using natural resources, while the second is often cited as an argument for protecting them. How would you explain the main idea of each of these verses in your own words? What do you think it means to "rule" over creation and "subdue" it? What doesn't it mean? What do you think God expects when he asks humans to "take care of" his creation?*
- *Of the various points Ortberg makes for why we should care for the earth, which line of argument seems strongest to you? Why? Which, if any, seem weak or unconvincing to you? Why?*



Women in the Wild



How five women encountered God during a transforming week in nature.

By Nicole Phinney

Chris had known the wilderness backpacking trip in the Colorado mountains would be a pilgrimage. But somehow this 40-something mother of two boys had pictured a pleasant walk in the woods. Now, 50 mountainous miles from the nearest town, she looked down at the cold, fast creek that rushed below her. She inched toward the rest of our group across a narrow log spanning the two banks, trying not to think about how her heavy backpack would pin her underwater if she slipped. The three other women in the group and I had carefully navigated our crossings. As we all stood and watched Chris's trembling steps, I was overwhelmed by the risk these women had taken. They may have chosen me to be their guide in the mountains, but in the wilderness of the heart, their faith was guiding me.

When my mom asked if I'd be interested in taking some women from her church to Colorado for a week, I was astounded. Mom knew I was an experienced hiker. And since I'd gone backpacking in Colorado before, she decided to ask me to lead them.



How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

"They want to go backpacking?"

Yes, Mom assured me. She and three of her Bible study friends, all over the age of 40, had read Hannah Hurnard's classic allegory, *Hinds' Feet on High Places*, about a young woman named Much-Afraid who was compelled by the gentle love of the Good Shepherd to follow him to the high places. Through the trials of her journey, she's transformed, and when she finally arrives to the high places, she's given a new name, Grace and Glory. Hurnard's tale inspired Mom and her friends to pursue God's love in the literal rocky heights.

Mom's friend Chris had dreamed up the idea. From the cozy warmth of my mom's suburban living room, she described her vision of the trip. "I might be crazy," she said, a glow of anticipation lighting her normally serious face. "But I want to go into the mountains and meet with God. The thing is, I don't know if I can walk 25 miles with 40 pounds on my back."

"It's not the hiking that worries me," Patty chimed in, laying a beautifully manicured hand on Chris's knee. "It's those narrow mountain paths, the high winds. What if we're blown off a cliff and break our necks?"

Eileen voiced her own concerns. "Let's get *real* for a minute. What do we do about feminine hygiene out there?"

My mom leaned forward in her chair. The "old pro" of the crew, she'd backpacked with me several years earlier. "Nicole will help us address our worries and





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

get prepared," she said. "But let's keep in mind why we wanted to go in the first place. Micah 4:2 says, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. . . . He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' Maybe part of learning God's way is about facing our fears."

I looked around the room at four beautiful, expectant faces. These four women were willing to follow me, a mere "kid" in my mid-twenties. They were taking quite a risk! Though I'd hiked more than 1,200 miles of back-country trails alone or with experienced partners, I'd never guided a group before. But this opportunity was too intriguing to resist!

After talking about tents, trails, sleeping bags, and yes, sanitation, I paused and said, "Ladies, this is going to be some kind of adventure!"

We arrived at the trailhead on a warm afternoon in late July. Lost Creek Wilderness, located in Colorado, rolled out before us, from deep green forest to rugged, wind-swept peaks. Nervous and excited, we helped each other on with our backpacks. Then we walked away from the last evidence of civilization we'd see for a week.

That first afternoon we hiked five miles. The trail was wide, well traveled, and gentle. We relaxed around a cheery campfire that night, giggling at Eileen, who passed around a bag of prunes "to ensure our mountain movement."





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

The next day got off to a slow start. I knew the trail ahead covered some rugged terrain. It would be a tough hike if we didn't get moving. But how could we resist picking wild strawberries and watching butterflies?

By afternoon, though, everyone was beat. We traversed along an exposed ridge. There was no shade and the sun drained what little energy we had left. A steep climb around some boulders took another hour. As the afternoon faded, we dropped into a low valley. The trail led to a 10-foot length of dead aspen trees bridging over a high running creek.

This was the only place to cross.

Using my hiking pole for balance, I carefully stepped onto the makeshift bridge. The log itself, though strong, bowed in the middle. It bounced with each step. There was no guardrail or handhold. Five feet below, sharp gray boulders, the size of tractor tires, caught at the swiftly flowing current. A fall would be disastrous. My heart was in my throat by the time I stepped onto the far bank.

The four women stared at me across the water. For a moment no one spoke. "Isn't there some other way?" Patty finally asked. I could only shake my head. This was the "point of no return." If we were to continue our journey, we all had to cross over the water. There was no other way around the obstacle.

Eileen was the first to attempt the bridge. Clenching her jaw, her eyes focused on the far end of the log with





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

the determination of a bulldog. One careful step after another brought her to the dirt bank next to me, and she let out a "whoop" of triumph and release.

Patty gathered her courage next. She stepped onto the log with an audible prayer: "Lord, keep my foot from slipping!" Those words carried her, haltingly, over the rushing water.

Chris stood on the far bank, pale and staring. "I can't do this," she said. "I'm not ready yet."

So my mom adjusted her backpack and began her trembling trip over the bowing log. Patty and I shouted encouragement from the far side: "You're looking good! Way to go!" Soon Mom was safely next to us on the bank.

Finally, it was Chris's turn. Patty and Eileen began their cheers of encouragement. Chris put her right foot on the log, then stepped back and looked over at us in anguish.

I asked the women at my side to be quiet so Chris could concentrate. By the look on her face, it was clear Chris needed internal strength, not external encouragement. This was her crossing. She had to do it her way.

Step by slow step, she inched her way toward us. Stopping halfway through, I saw the panic rise in her face. The sound of rushing water pounded in her ears. "Keep walking, Chris," I softly urged. "Keep moving toward us." Her breath caught in her throat, but she took another step. Then another.





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

Finally Chris reached out, and Patty and Mom grasped her hands, supporting her through the last few steps. Eileen let out another "whoop" of relief and triumph. "We made it!" Chris shouted, close to tears. "We made it, and God's here with us!"

The morning of day three began with beautiful clear skies and a two-mile climb up to a steep ridge. I glanced up the incline, looking for that line of sky that indicated the end of the climb. I couldn't see it. I fell to the back of the line where Eileen, still struggling with the lack of oxygen at high altitude, was forced to take her time. She and I trudged along with our eyes glued to the trail. Our lungs ached, and our hearts pounded.

We almost bumped into Patty, Chris, and Mom before we saw them stopped on the trail. They grinned at us. "Look around," Mom said.

Eileen and I had been so busy fighting for each step, we'd neglected what surrounded us: Gigantic rocks, the color of rust, reached into an electric blue sky. The spicy smell of pine cleared our heads. Our rippling laughter joined the wind, flying down to the valley below. The beauty of creation, excessive and abundant, proclaimed God's overwhelming love! Eileen and I looked at each other. We were both in tears, not from fear or pain, but from sheer joy.

When we started up the path again, it was at a slower pace. Instead of pounding our way to the top, we sang our way there to the words of "Amazing Grace."





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

We made camp early that night. Chris treated us to a squashed bag of marshmallows she'd been hiding in her pack. Our laughter came easily, and we slept like stones until dawn.

By midmorning on the fourth day, we climbed one more ridge to arrive at our own "high place." Rising like a two-story building above the turf that grounded the pine trees, great lumps of rusty red stone seemed to bubble into the air. I dropped my pack and scrambled up the red boulders, beckoning the women to follow me. At 11,400 feet, I perched on a rocky outcrop with a 360-degree view of the land around us: the plains to the east, the great mountains north and west, and Pikes Peak, rising like an altar to the south. "Come on, you guys," I called, "You're going to love this!"

Four women stared up at me over the boulders. I must have looked like a mountain goat, standing on the top-most hump of the jumbled rock formation. Even from that distance I recognized the fear in their faces.

This dangerous ascent was optional. They had to make the choice.

Without hesitation, Chris, who'd reluctantly crossed the dangerous stream, now asked, "How did you get up there?" With a little effort she scrambled onto the rock next to me. My mom wasn't far behind her. But Patty and Eileen eyed the rocks with uncertainty. "You don't have to do this if you don't want to," I called.





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

Patty slowly made her way over the boulders to the tight crevice. "My kids would die if they saw me doing this!" she gulped. Staying as close to the rock as she could, Patty finally sat next to my mom, trembling but calm.

Eileen had stayed on the lower boulders while Patty got settled. The look of fierce attack she'd worn two days earlier was gone. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and swallowed hard. With careful steps, she traversed over to the steep crack just below our perch. She stepped into the rock with her left foot and reached up with her right hand. Unable to place her other foot on the rock, Eileen stepped back. She tried again. This time she climbed a little higher, then her foot slipped. She lost her handhold, slid down to a level spot, and scraped her knees and palms in the process. She looked up at us.

"I don't think . . ." she started.

"I don't want to hear it," Chris cut her off. "You're going to make it up here. Try it again." We all held our breath as Eileen placed her foot in the rock crevice once more. This time she pulled herself up. She found another place for her foot and climbed still higher. She leveraged her knee against the stone, pushed up, and sat down next to Patty, breathing deeply. Chris reached over and squeezed her hand.

The wind swirled around us and we sat in silence, stunned by the view. Snowcapped peaks in the distance reached out to meet the sky. Tree-covered ridges fell away below us. Bright green valleys glinted with





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

running creeks. For miles around, there was no higher ground. It was too much to take in all at once.

"We made it," Chris whispered, teary-eyed, "and God is here with us."

On our fifth and final day in Lost Creek Wilderness, we agreed to walk the final two miles of trail in silence.

One by one we returned to the trailhead, exhausted, filthy, aching, but full of joy and peace. We splashed our faces with clear stream water. We wrapped our arms around each other. A few tears of amazement and gratitude fell down our sunburned cheeks. "We're back where we started," I told them. "But the trail doesn't end here." We joined hands and prayed, took one last look at the path behind us, then set our eyes on the trail ahead—and walked on.

Our trek through the mountains of Lost Creek abounded with inspiring moments, some of them shared among us, some of them too personal for words.

Through it all, in the faces of four inexperienced, willing women, I saw fear transformed into faith. "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord," they'd said. Stepping onto the trail was a holy education—the kind the prophet Micah talked about—"He will teach us his ways."

In the year since I took this journey with Chris, Patty, Eileen, and my mom, we each have traveled a different path. But we all were impacted by the lessons of the trail.





How Green Should We Be?

Women in the Wild

Back at her job, Chris discovered an ease in talking about God to her coworkers she'd never had before. Patty spent several weeks rebuilding houses with a local church in Appalachia. Eileen returned home to a family crisis with renewed inner strength. My mom volunteered for a short-term mission trip to Guatemala. All four plan to take another trip in a year, and several women from their church have asked to go along. I've made my way farther west, back to school.

"People ask me why I want to backpack," my mom shared recently after a weeklong hiking trip. "I don't know how to explain that it's not about backpacking. It's about learning how to live with endurance, faith, and joy."

These middle-aged women and I allowed God's gentle love to compel us to dangerous heights. As we moved from our various places of ragged fright, across swift water and over jagged rock, we were reminded of the importance of a deep, unspoken trust in the living God. We saw the impossible become possible. And God's love for us was demonstrated not only through nature, but in our love for each other.

Through the valleys and peaks of our mountain journey, we each took one more transforming step in the lifelong adventure of walking with God.

Nicole Phinney, a freelance writer, lives in New Mexico. This article first appeared in the July/August 2001 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN magazine.





Reflect

- *Have you ever had an outdoor "adventure" like the women in this article? Describe a meaningful encounter you've had in nature, such as camping, rafting, hiking, or something similar. Would you ever want to do something as intense as these women did? Why or why not?*
- *These women encountered God in life-transforming ways during their trek. Read **Romans 1:20** and **Psalm 19:1-4**. When have you learned truths about God through the sights and sounds of nature? How else have you experienced God or felt close to him through time spent in nature?*
- *Putting all the other controversies about environmentalism aside for a moment, how important do you think it is for Christians to conserve natural wonders such as the Lost Creek Wilderness? What degree of priority, if any, should conservation have in our lives? How would you defend your view? What practical things can a person like you do to conserve natural wonders?*





Environmental Wager

Should we be cool toward
global warming?

By Andy Crouch

The theory is taken for granted by nearly every scientist working in the field. But because it is difficult to confirm experimentally, a few vocal skeptics continue to raise pointed questions. The skeptics find a ready audience among evangelical Christians, with groups like Focus on the Family saying that "significant disagreement exists within the scientific community regarding the validity of this theory."



How Green Should We Be? Environmental Wager

I'm not talking about evolution. Or maybe I am.

The issue in question is not our distant past but our near future. The theory is the all-but-unanimous scientific consensus that human beings are changing the climate by emitting gigatons of carbon into the atmosphere, and that if we do nothing to change our behavior, the warming trend that has taken hold for the past century may well become a runaway gallop.

Prompt action could not only avert the worst consequences—extreme drought and ocean levels rising as much as three feet by 2100—but could actually open up a new era of prosperity through the development of new, more efficient technologies. Some evangelical leaders—including the editors of *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*—have called for action to address climate change. But for many churchgoers, the issue seems murky, its complexity amplified by claims of "significant disagreement."

There is in fact no serious disagreement among scientists that human beings are playing a major role in global warming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose scientific working group was chaired for many years by the evangelical Christian Sir John Houghton, concluded in 2001 that "most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities." These conclusions, Houghton points out, were vetted by more than 100 governments including the United States: "No assessments on any other scientific topic have been so thoroughly researched and reviewed."





How Green Should We Be?

Environmental Wager

Unfortunately, there is another politically loaded issue where scientific agreement has failed to convince the public. If evangelicals mistrust scientists when they make pronouncements about the future, it may be because of the history of antagonism between biblical faith and evolution. As pro-evolution philosopher Michael Ruse points out in a recent book, evolution began as an alternative to Christianity before it acquired scientific respectability. It was evolutionism—a naturalistic worldview that excluded the biblical Creator—before it was science.

The resulting battle between evolutionism and Christian faith has had countless unfortunate consequences. Some Christians resorted to a wooden interpretation of the first pages of Genesis that was no better as science than evolution was as a worldview. More recently, some scientists have reacted with fanatical hostility to the questions that proponents of Intelligent Design ask about evolution.

But perhaps no result of the creation-evolution stalemate is as potentially disastrous as the way it has stymied courageous action on climate change. In May, for a serious article about Intelligent Design that described one proponent's books as "packed with provocative ideas," the editors of *The New Yorker* chose the snippy headline, "Why intelligent design isn't." Rhetoric like that hardly disposes conservative Christians to trust the impeccably researched articles about climate change the magazine published earlier in the year.





How Green Should We Be?

Environmental Wager

All science is ultimately a matter of trust. The tools, methods, and mathematical skills scientists acquire over years of training are beyond the reach of the rest of us, even of scientists in different fields. Thanks to the creation-evolution debate, mistrust between scientists and conservative Christians runs deep. But those scarred by battles with evolutionists might still consider heeding the scientists who are warning us about climate change. As an evangelical scientist said to me recently, the debate over climate change is very much like Pascal's wager, that famous argument for belief in God.

Believe in God though he does not exist, Pascal argued, and you lose nothing in the end. Fail to believe when he does in fact exist, and you lose everything. Likewise, we have little to lose, and much technological progress, energy security, and economic efficiency to gain, if we act on climate change now—even if the worst predictions fail to come to pass. But if we choose inaction and are mistaken, we will leave our descendants a blighted world. As Pascal said, "You must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see."

Andy Crouch is the editor of Christianity Today International's Christian Vision Project. This article first appeared in the August 2005 issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY magazine.





Reflect

- *What's your gut reaction to the phrase "global warming"? Is it positive or negative? Believing, disbelieving, or skeptical? What other words, images, or people come to mind when you hear the phrase? Why?*
- *Do you think politics cloud this issue? Do your own political leanings influence your stance on this matter? Do you think it is even possible to divorce this issue from politics? Explain.*
- *Crouch uses Pascal's argument about the existence of God to pose a similar question: What do we lose if we act on climate change? And on the other hand, what might we lose if we don't? What do you think: if scientific claims about human-caused global warming are true, do you think Christians have a responsibility to work to prevent or slow global warming? Why or why not?*



Second Coming Ecology



We care for the environment precisely because God will create a new earth.

By David Neff

Sunday morning, May 18, 1980, my children were leaving the little Presbyterian church in College Place, Washington, where they had been attending a program. They looked up at the sky, and a verse they had read in the Bible leapt to their minds. Jesus said that in the last days, the sun would be darkened, and the moon would not give its light. The sky was so preternaturally dark that my girls thought that the end of the world was upon us. They joined hands and ran the several blocks to our home.



How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

What had happened was the deadliest and most economically destructive volcanic event in U.S. history. Mount St. Helens had blown its dome, killing 57 people and destroying 250 homes, 47 bridges, 15 miles of railway, and 185 miles of highway. The ash cloud darkened our skies, and the nasty stuff settled on our houses and yards and cars, making it impossible to drive without clogging the air intakes and harming the engines.

It was tricky to cope with the event for the next few weeks, but the damage near our home was minor compared with what people in western Washington had to deal with. But for my little girls—for just a moment—it was the end of the world.

Christians have consistently been end-of-the-world people, with at least one eye on matters related to eschatology or "last things"—final judgment, the second coming of Christ, death and the resurrection of the dead, the renewal of creation, and the coming of God's rule in its fullest and most visible expression. Yet contemporary realities have forced Christians to explore what it means to be an anticipatory people with a strong orientation to these last things when facing environmental degradation, and perhaps even environmental disaster.

Too Future-Minded to be of Present Good?

It's often said that many Christians—particularly evangelical Christians—don't care for the environment precisely because they are so focused on end times. If God is going to come and destroy all this anyway,





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

why should we invest our energies in preserving it? A frequently cited example is James Watt, an evangelical believer and former Secretary of the Interior during the Reagan administration. Here is one account: "James Watt told the U.S. Congress that protecting natural resources was unimportant in light of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. In public testimony he said, 'After the last tree is felled, Christ will come back.'"

To many minds, this succinct quote effectively sums up the attitudes of evangelicals, except for one crucial fact: James Watt didn't say that. This oft-repeated quote comes from a journalist who didn't bother to confirm something that he read on the Internet.

What did James Watt actually say? The only time he gave public testimony about the relationship between his Christian beliefs and care for the environment was in February 1981, in response to Oregon Democrat Jim Weaver, before a House subcommittee on the environment.

Mr. Weaver: I believe very strongly that we should not. . . use up all the oil that took nature a billion years to make in one century.

We ought to leave a few drops of it for our children, their children. They are going to need it. . . I wonder if you agree, also, in the general statement that we should leave some of our resources—I am now talking about scenic areas or preservation, but scenic resources for our children? Not just gobble them up all at once?





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

Secretary Watt: Absolutely. That is the delicate balance the Secretary of the Interior must have, to be a steward for the natural resources for this generation as well as future generations.

I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns, whatever it is we have to manage with a skill to leave the resources needed for future generations (emphasis added).

That's more like it.

How can a people focused steadily on the last days find the theological motivation and will to steward the natural world "with a skill to leave the resources needed for future generations"?

Creation as Promise to Keep

Theologian John Haught of Georgetown University claims that Christians should not bracket their beliefs about last things when thinking theologically about the environment. There is a fear among theologians who specialize in thinking about the environment that too much talk about the End (for that matter, any talk at all) will undermine care for the creation. But as the example of James Watt shows us, "It ain't necessarily so."

As the great German theologian Jürgen Moltmann wrote in *Theology of Hope*:

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. . . . Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole Church. There is therefore only one real problem in Christian theology. . . : the problem of the future.

Haught says we need to think of our doctrine of last things in terms of promise. Of course, the biblical doctrine is a mix of promise and threat, of renewal and destruction, of victory for good and judgment for evil. But the promise of God's kingdom is fundamentally good news, and as a promise it carries within it some importance for the present.

Perhaps an analogy would help illuminate the dynamics of promise. If a young man gives a young woman an engagement ring, this pledge is a carrier of promise, but it is not the wedding band itself—just as the engagement is not the wedding. Similarly, our present existence is like the engagement, and the fullness of the kingdom is like the wedding. Our present environment is God's gift to us. It is not all that it will be when the "wedding" comes, but it is extremely valuable—just like the engagement ring.





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

I don't think any young woman favorably inclined to her suitor has ever said, "Well *forget that*, it's only an engagement ring. What I wanted was a wedding ring." No, you don't dis an engagement ring.

Or think of a teenager eager to learn to drive, who has just acquired a learner's permit. The learner's permit is not a driver's license. But it is what it is—a bearer of promise. What young man getting his learner's permit doesn't beam with joy? While it's not a driver's license, no teen disrespects a permit.

So an orientation toward that which is to come helps us think in terms of promise and fulfillment. And while promise isn't fulfillment, it is something precious.

Keeping the End in Mind

Framing a discussion of the natural world eschatologically also leads toward other lines of thought we should consider:

First, knowing that the creation as we have it is promise and not fulfillment means that we will recognize its limits and conserve it. Nature as we know it is bountiful, but not unbounded. As we have been repeatedly reminded, there are limits to fossil fuels. Even the fuels for nuclear power are seriously limited. These facts should not surprise us. The creation is a limited thing, a provisional thing.

Christians with an eschatological vision do not want to despoil the earth of its resources. Part of being human is learning to live (and consume) within limits. It is





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

liberal Christianity, at least in its classic form with its unbounded optimism about human resourcefulness and technological prowess, that should be readjusting. Christians operating with the End in mind should always have limits in view, but like everyone else in North America, Christians have by and large been co-opted by consumer culture. It is now up to us to live with a theology of limits.

Similarly, seeing creation as promise prevents us from treating it as mere raw material. If the gift of creation were simply a commodity, then we could consume it the way we consume a gift box of chocolates. But because it carries promise, it must be conserved until the time of fulfillment.

Second, knowing that creation is God's promise helps us realize that the creation is not an ultimate value. The theologians who don't pay attention to this fact end up sliding off into one of any number of views that simply get the world wrong: pantheism, nature mysticism, deep ecology, or re-paganization.

While it is important to reject the mechanical materialism of the 17th century (the philosophy that paved the way for industrialization), there is no reason to revert to nature idolatry, paganism, shamanism, or animism. We need to be sure that the core ecological insight—of the complex, web-like interrelatedness of all things animate and inanimate—guides us to a more sophisticated scientific outlook, not an anti-technological mysticism. The technological revolutions





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

that accompanied the rise of capitalism did in fact make life a lot better for many people. They brought health, nutrition, and leisure to the masses for the first time in history. So we are careful to treat nature as a relative good rather than something to be worshiped.

Similarly, seeing nature through eschatological eyes helps us rise above natural cycles. In the ancient world, the pagan view of history was tied to the cycles of fertility and the seasons. The seasonal flooding of the Nile, the early and later rainy seasons in Palestine—these things dominated the pagan view of life. But the Jewish and Christian views were historical. Biblical religion celebrated God's abundance in the annual agricultural cycles. But the more important festivals celebrated historical events: the liberation from slavery in Egypt and the giving of the Torah. This prepared them to understand God and his actions in the framework of world history. What the superpowers of the day—Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—did was of significance to God and God's people. And for Christians, what happened at the Cross became the center point of history.

Eschatology is one form of biblical historical consciousness. It helps us see the cosmos in the context of time and history. Such a historical view is a religious perspective that empowers people to take significant action, and not be bound to insignificance by the cycles of time.

Third, an eschatological frame helps us take account of the big picture of salvation. Evangelical forms of





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

Christianity—most notably its pietist and revivalist strands—have tended to focus on the personal experience of present salvation. And there are good historical reasons for that. Think of Luther's struggle for a sense of acceptance with a wrathful God. Or think of John Wesley's famous experience of having his heart strangely warmed when he heard the preface to Luther's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* read at Aldersgate Chapel: "An assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

But as the apostle Paul contemplates the end of all things in his epistle to the church in Rome, he talks not just about individuals awaiting their redemption, but about the whole creation as well.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. (Romans 8:20–24)

Christ didn't come to save just you or just me—though his ultimate sacrifice assures us of our individual worth. He came to save Adam's fallen race by becoming the Second Adam, the head of a new humanity that will someday





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

inhabit a new and improved version of the Eden that Adam and Eve were forced to leave. When we remember that a restored humanity in a restored Eden is the crowning vision of Scripture, we come to see ourselves and our responsibilities in a bigger, broader landscape. That broader landscape will encourage us to engage with the "groanings" of creation as we are now able to hear them.

Fourth, an eschatological perspective helps us save nature for God's sake, not just for our own benefit. Care for the natural world is not just about a cost-benefit analysis for human welfare, though that must always be done. But if God has a plan for this natural world, has a bright future for it, we do not always need to see the benefit for ourselves before acting to preserve the natural order. It should be enough for us that this is part of God's vision for the future and a carrier of his promises.

Fifth, and finally, an eschatological perspective can help us deepen our relationship to all people and all things. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, and Jesus defined "neighbor" in extremely broad terms. I find it difficult to love and serve as broadly as Jesus calls me to. In the global community that communication technology and multinational businesses have brought about, I can know about, and feel concern about, needs that I can never hope to address. Geographical and cultural distance can be a real source of frustration when I hear that genocide is going on in one place or starvation in another. Aside from e-mailing my congressional representative and donating a few dollars to disaster response and relief work, it is hard to know how to relate.





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

There are limitations on my present existence that will no longer exist in the kingdom of God. Yet for now, despite limits of money, time, and energy, as well as cultural, ethnic, and linguistic barriers, relate I must.

The eschatological vision portrays a global community that is no longer divided by tribal and ethnic barriers. Both the Hebrew prophets and the Book of Revelation portray a new humanity drawn from every tribe and nation, language group and people. That vision causes me to care just as much about what rising sea levels do to impoverished people in Bangladesh as about what they do to affluent people living on the isle of Manhattan. That vision causes me to care just as much about what happens when sea erosion causes buildings to collapse on the Alaskan island of Shishmaref as it does when rich people's houses in Malibu slide into the ocean.

Seeing through eschatological eyes pushes me in the direction of relating to desperate people who are at a distance, because God has promised some day to bring them close. When I was growing up, eschatology meant "end times"—that is, my church focused on the timing and manner of final events.

But Jesus and the apostles played down the time element and even the manner of the End. Instead, they emphasized the inbreaking of God's rule and the way our ability to see his rule helps to transform the present.





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

If we are given that ability to see God at work, bringing the present into contact with the End, we cannot be indifferent to the way things are. We cannot be deaf to the groanings of creation. And we can treasure every gift God gives us as a sign of his promises.

David Neff is editor in chief of the Christianity Today media group. This article first appeared in the July 2008 issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY magazine.

Reflect

- *Neff writes, "It's often said that many Christians—particularly evangelical Christians—don't care for the environment precisely because they are so focused on end times. If God is going to come and destroy all this anyway, why should we invest our energies in preserving it?" How have you observed this type of thinking in evangelical culture? In your church? How does your own perspective on the end times interplay with your views on the environment?*
- *Neff quotes James Watt as saying, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns, whatever it is we have to manage with a skill to leave the resources needed for future generations." As you consider the life of future generations, particularly if you have children or grandchildren, what do you hope the state of the environment (air quality, climate, parks, and so on) will be for them in their lifetime? What do you think it will likely actually be?*





How Green Should We Be?

Second Coming Ecology

- *Read **Luke 10:25–37**. How does the principle of loving our neighbors play into the issue of creation care? Share examples you've seen or read about in which environmental damage or abuse has resulted in harm to human beings. Do you think preventing that type of abuse is a meaningful way to love one's neighbor? In your opinion, must environmental care be part of our love for our neighbors? Why or why not?*



Going Green



These evangelical leaders have become champions for the environment.

By Jocelyn C. Green

Tri Robinson pastors Vineyard Boise Church in Boise, Idaho, a growing fellowship of more than 3,000 members. He also hunts, fishes, and maintains a ranch outside of town. He voted for George W. Bush—twice—and is a creationist, pro-life, and against same-sex marriage. But this "Red State" evangelical Christian isn't just red—he's also green.

Reconciling the two, however, has taken Robinson years. Before he was a Christian, caring for the environment came naturally. A science teacher for 10 years, he and his wife, Nancy, spent the first 14 years of their marriage without electricity in an older home on the family ranch in California. They grew some of their own food and truly appreciated the value of nature.



How Green Should We Be?

Going Green

Then Robinson became a Christian and entered the ministry during a time when many Christians translated the theology that Jesus was coming back soon as a green light to use up the earth. So he set aside his devotion to nature.

But during the last 15 years, the conviction to care for God's creation grew in Robinson's spirit, until he decided to bring the issue to his congregation. He spent six months formulating his message, all the while battling fears he'd be perceived as liberal or extreme.

"I was scared to death about delivering that message," says Robinson. "I hoped that the Lord really had spoken to me about it."

His congregation's response shocked Robinson. "Tears filled my eyes when I received a standing ovation at every service and a \$10,000 start-up special offering," he recalls. "In 25 years of preaching, it was the first time I'd ever received a standing ovation. I realized Christians are just waiting for leaders to talk about the elephant in the room."

The Great Omission

Where once there was a gaping hole in the conversational landscape, Christian voices are ringing out across the country.

"I remember that on Earth Day 1990, my local church didn't mention it at all," says Albert Hsu, associate editor of InterVarsity Press and author of *The Suburban Christian*. "My pastor later told me it wasn't a Christian





How Green Should We Be?

Going Green

thing to care about. That was a wake-up call. I think a lot of this goes back to Gnosticism, when people thought the physical world was evil. Those ideas can lead to bad stewardship. Certain denominations believe this world will be destroyed in the end times so we needn't bother caring for it. But God declared this world good and calls us to take care of it."

Robinson points out that caring for the environment was God's idea before it made the agenda of any political party. "In Genesis chapter 9, the covenant was made, and with it came our responsibility for the creation," he says. "I believe that if anything is going to change, it has to come through biblical truth. Servanthood and stewardship should be our thing. If we're truly evangelicals, we need to act on this."

In February 2006, 86 evangelical leaders added their names to the statement "Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action," released by the Evangelical Climate Initiative. The document claims that a climate change resulting from global warming is real and will hit the poor the hardest, and that Christians are morally obligated to act now. Among the signatories are the presidents of Christian relief organizations, universities, and associations, and nationally known pastors like Rick Warren and Jack Hayford. Twelve years earlier, in 1994, the Evangelical Environmental Network garnered 500 signatories with its "An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation."

Even so, says Hsu, with so many American Christians living in the "land of plenty," it's difficult to keep the environment at the forefront of one's mind. "Suburbia is a





How Green Should We Be?

Going Green

consumer culture," he says. "If we need something, we buy it and use it, instead of finding alternatives. One of the problems in suburbia is that it's a place of abundance where we don't see the scarcity and limitation of resources."

Biblically Consistent

Richard Cizik, vice president of government relations for the National Association of Evangelicals until his resignation in December 2008, was converted to the cause of creation care in 2002 by a Christian scientist speaking on climate change in Oxford, England. Since that time, he has been an outspoken advocate for stewardship—not for the earth in and of itself, but for its impact on the people it sustains. His unique position as a major evangelical leader who has "gone green" has caught the attention of national media like *Newsweek* and ABC News.

"This is about people," says Cizik. "People are eternal." And people are suffering. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), diarrheal disease is responsible for the deaths of 1.8 million people each year. It's estimated that 88 percent of that is attributable to unsafe water supply, sanitation, and hygiene, and is mostly concentrated on children in developing countries. WHO also estimates that 3 million people are killed worldwide annually by outdoor air pollution from vehicles and industrial emissions, 1.6 million indoors through using solid fuel. Again, most of these deaths happen in poor countries. Many argue that climate change is also responsible for the devastating hurricanes and tsunamis in recent years.





How Green Should We Be?

Going Green

"We Christians have no problem taking mercy and medical aid to suffering nations, so why not focus on improving the environmental conditions that are causing this suffering in the first place?" says Robinson. "We're marrying environmental mission with missions ministry at our church, including well-digging, reforestation, conservation in the third world, training young people. This is not a social gospel; it's a holistic gospel."

But many prominent evangelical leaders aren't sold. They question the science behind global warming, and accuse Christians like Cizik of buying into a liberal agenda. While the environment has been a politically charged subject for decades, Cizik hopes that politics won't stand in the way of action. "Sometimes to be biblically consistent, you have to be politically inconsistent," he says. "A lot of us have to look beyond party labels to scriptural admonition. Isn't there something at stake here that we might happen to agree with Democrats on? This is not about politics; fundamentally, it's about obedience to God."

Patricia Fagg is coordinator of Great Lakes community programs for the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, which provides university-level courses as well as educational activities for children and adults in northern Michigan, the Pacific Northwest, South Florida, and South India. "In Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, he translated to say those who use and abuse each other, sex, the earth, and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom," observes Fagg. "In other translations, the earth isn't specifically mentioned, but greed is. But Peterson makes it clear that the apostle





How Green Should We Be?

Going Green

Paul was talking about a heart issue: are we nurturers or exploiters?"

Mike Erre, pastor of teaching and family ministries at the 4,000-member Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, California, and author of *The Jesus of Suburbia*, is convinced that on the issue of the environment, Christians should be in agreement. "It's the creation mandate found in Genesis," he says. "Fill the earth and subdue it, although subdue does not mean to exploit. It means to care-take, to serve. To use, certainly, but God very clearly gives human beings stewardship over the earth. Followers of Jesus should be leading the way for care and concern for the environment."

Turning Green

Once the applause died after Robinson's initial message on caring for the environment, his congregation rolled up their sleeves and got to work. They obtained recycle bins, printed bulletins on recycled paper, collected old cell phones for recycling, and conducted four seminars on leaving the world a better place: in your home, in the community, in the wilderness, and in the state. They contacted government agencies to learn how best to serve them through volunteer service projects. Now, their ministry in this area is a model for churches across the country. Robinson's book, *Saving God's Green Earth*, was released in 2006 by Ampelon Publishing. The movement of environmental stewardship from a biblical mindset is spreading not only through local churches, but through Christian universities as well. In fact, 34 of the 86 signatories of the 2006 Climate Change statement were presidents of member campuses of the Council for





How Green Should We Be?

Going Green

Christian Colleges & Universities. Far from just paying lip service to the cause, many of these campuses have built "green" facilities, use wind energy for part of their power, implement full-scale recycling programs, are active in restoration projects, and more.

Dr. Paul Rothrock teaches environmental science at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, the alma mater of Stephen Johnson, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency during President Bush's second term. Taylor instituted a master's program in environmental science in 2005.

"My experience is that those in the environmental community are good people and we can and should be working with them, should see them as fellow human beings," says Rothrock. "This is an excellent bridge for finding commonalities, and for having opportunities to share the gospel. Creation care is part of our Christian mandate to be stewards. It's a justice issue—in that the poor are greatly impacted by environmental quality. It's also a family issue, because I'm leaving this earth to future generations."

In 25 years of full-time Christian ministry, Tri Robinson has never experienced such momentum from a congregation as he has with the development of his environmental ministry, Let's Tend the Garden. Feeling as though he has awakened a sleeping giant, he says, "I don't even claim to be an environmentalist. I just try to be biblically obedient."

Jocelyn C. Green is a full-time freelance writer living in Cedar Falls, Iowa. This article first appeared in the May/June 2007 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN magazine.





Reflect

- *Have you ever heard creation care or environmentalism addressed from the pulpit at your church? If so, what was said about it? How did your church respond? If not, why do you think it hasn't been mentioned? How do you think your congregation would respond to a sermon like Tri Robinson's? Explain.*
- *Read **1 Corinthians 6:9–10** in your Bible, then compare it to this paraphrase in The Message: "Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom." What do you think about The Message's description of "use and abuse" of the earth as an un-kingdom-like behavior? Explain.*
- *In the article, Mike Erre says that "Followers of Jesus should be leading the way for care and concern for the environment." How can creation care be an avenue of pointing others to Jesus? On the flip-side, how can a Christian's lack of concern for the environment be a "turn off" to non-Christians and spiritual seekers? How would you like to see your church lead the way in creation care?*



It's Not Easy Being Green



How's a Christian to respond to the hot-button controversies about the environment?

By Holly Vicente Robaina

You could say my grandma was eco-friendly. Decades before caring about the environment was in vogue, she set her thermostat low and pulled on a sweater. She reused glass jars and tin cans for canning, baking, and crafts. She patched old clothes. When those became threadbare, she recycled the material to make rugs and potholders.

Yet if Grandma were alive today, she'd be perplexed by Al Gore PSAs, Prius-driving celebrities making "green" living trendy, and "eco-anxiety"—a new mental disorder characterized by intense fear about the dangers of global warming. Grandma probably never imagined common-sense simplicity (today called "conservation") would become a hot-button issue.



How Green Should We Be? It's Not Easy Being Green

Taking Sides

The debate over environmentalism—specifically, global warming—has intensified over the past few years. Some Christian leaders assert the Bible mandates us to take responsibility for "creation care;" others state that when God granted humans dominion over the earth, he gave us the right to use it. Many Christians express opinions that fall somewhere in between.

Two groups of evangelicals have been feuding over this issue for the past two years. They've held press conferences, released public statements, and sent letters to top government officials. This battle even drew extensive news coverage, including a PBS special report, "Is God Green?"

Both sides support their claims with climate experts and research data. The Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), whose members include Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*; Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners* magazine; and Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, believes human activities cause climate changes. An advocate of immediate carbon-emissions reduction, the ECI is asking U.S. leaders to pass laws requiring businesses to reduce emissions, and encouraging churches and individuals to purchase energy-efficient appliances and vehicles. Essentially it's saying: Be proactive. Measures taken today will lessen the potentially devastating effects of global warming in the future.





How Green Should We Be? It's Not Easy Being Green

On the other side is the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation. Backed by James Dobson of Focus on the Family, and Chuck Colson, chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries, the Cornwall Alliance also acknowledges global warming, but it believes natural factors—not human activities—may be global warming's primary cause. Additionally, the Cornwall Alliance believes if world governments call for mandatory reduction of fossil-fuel use, gas prices will skyrocket and economic development in poor countries will slow, creating a far worse situation than global warming might cause. And, the Alliance suggests, global warming may produce benefits scientists haven't yet discovered. Essentially it's saying: Be prudent. Hasty actions without thorough study of global warming might cause bigger problems than we currently have.

A Spiritual Issue?

Noticing both camps represent a literal who's who of evangelical Christianity, I wonder, *Should I be proactive or prudent—especially with global destruction on the line?*

Then I think about my grandmother. Grandma never faced the two great threats of today: excessiveness and entitlement. I can afford to buy disposable tableware, hand wipes, cameras, cell phones, and plenty of other one-use items. How does this abundance affect my attitude toward possessions—and life? Will I become ungrateful for what's used but still serviceable? Do I become more self-sufficient rather than God-dependent when I obtain whatever I want, whenever I want it?





How Green Should We Be?

It's Not Easy Being Green

Suddenly, conservation isn't solely about reducing carbon emissions or saving the planet. It's about God's supremacy, his benevolence to me. If I'm conserving merely as a matter of self-preservation or self-reliance, I've missed the point.

Two concepts offer clarity: simplicity and stewardship. Simplicity says: I don't need to buy a new wardrobe every season to feel pretty. I don't need to leave every light on in my house to feel safe. I don't need to drive a gas-guzzling SUV to feel empowered. If I realize I don't need those things to feel good about myself, maybe I'll look to God more often for my value. Stewardship similarly says: Everything I have is on loan from God, so being careful with his stuff shows him respect.

At some point, I may need to take sides on the environmental issue. Until then, I'll use my God-given common sense about conservation—just as Grandma did. My grandmother's thrift was an expression of gratitude to God. When we reduce, reuse, recycle—we're being proactive, prudent, *and* grateful.

Holly Vicente Robaina is a regular contributor to TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN and TCW's Walk With Me blog. This article first appeared in the March/April 2008 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN magazine.





How Green Should We Be? It's Not Easy Being Green

THE SIMPLE(R) LIFE

7 easy ways to protect the planet's resources.

- 1.** Turn the faucet off while you brush your teeth and lather up your hands. Keep showers as short as possible, and turn the water off while you're shaving. Most showers pump out up to five gallons of water per minute.
- 2.** Wash clothes in cold water. And consider letting them "line dry" instead of tossing them into the dryer.
- 3.** Keep car tires properly inflated to save gas and maybe even extend the life of the car itself.
- 4.** Plan errands. One trip rather than three saves gas and wear-and-tear on your car. And you'll likely save time, too.
- 5.** Reuse packaging. That plastic yogurt tub and glass salsa jar are already food-safe and thus perfect for storing leftovers. Save heavy packing boxes to store crafts or ship Christmas gifts, or offer the boxes to a friend who's moving.
- 6.** Pay bills online. You won't have to spend time—and money—buying stamps, writing checks, and driving to the post office. If you've wondered why utility companies and merchants offer incentives to switch to electronic billing, mystery solved: They save time and money, too.
- 7.** Take care of possessions; buy less. Only buy clothing you'll need. Reattach buttons and mend any still-usable pieces. Donate items you haven't worn in more than a year. Remember, everything has a cost far beyond the price tag: Each product requires natural resources to manufacture and transport.

Reflect

◦ *Robaina describes two camps in evangelicalism when it comes to the environment: one which urges Christians to be pro-active and the other which cautions Christians to be prudent. Which of these two points of view do you most naturally gravitate toward? Why? How about your family, friends, and church? Step inside the viewpoint of the other camp for a moment: What common ground can you find with them?*





How Green Should We Be? It's Not Easy Being Green

- *Robaina highlights two spiritual disciplines that sidestep the controversies and enable Christians to properly care for creation: simplicity and stewardship. Read **Matthew 6:24–34**. Imagine a woman today really living this out—what would her everyday life look like? How would her life be different than the typical lifestyle of women in our culture?*
- *The author highlights seven ways we can practice simplicity and stewardship to care for the created world. Add some ideas of your own; what other big or small steps can a person take to live simply and as a good steward?*



Additional Resources

Books, Bible studies, and articles to help you further.



Creation Care Bible Study by Christianity Today International (Thomas Nelson, 2009; 128 pages). Based on articles published in CHRISTIANITY TODAY magazine, this 8-week guide addresses difficult topics such as stewardship, the environment, and global warming. Discover what Scripture has to say about caring for God's creation.

For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care by Steven Bouma-Prediger (Baker, 2001; 256 pages). At a time when it seems humans have erred much in their treatment of the planet, this book explores the relationship between Christianity and the degradation and restoration of the natural world. This substantive yet accessible book argues that true Christianity acknowledges the responsibility and privilege Christians have been given as stewards of the earth—the earth God created, lovingly sustains, and will one day make whole again.





How Green Should We Be?

Additional Resources

Gardening Eden: How Creation Care Will Change Your Faith, Your Life, and Our World by Michael Abbate (Waterbrook Press, 2009; 288 pages). A "green" development strategies expert, Abbate invites you to consider a new spiritual perspective of practical environmentalism. You'll learn how to preserve the fundamental connection between your soul and the planet; and discover creation care as an act of worship and a call to deeper harmony with God, your fellow gardeners, and the living Earth.

Go Green, Save Green: A Simple Guide to Saving Time, Money, and God's Green Earth by Nancy Sleeth (Tyndale, 2009; 350 pages). Many people want to "go green" but put it off because they believe it's too time consuming and too expensive. Not so! Nancy Sleeth and her family have been living an eco-friendly lifestyle for years, saving both time and money. In this book, Sleeth divulges hundreds of practical, easy-to-implement steps that you can take to create substantial money savings while protecting the earth.

Green Revolution: Coming Together to Care for Creation by Ben Lowe (Intervarsity Press, 2009; 192 pages.) Activist Lowe goes beyond the immobilizing "what can I do" perspective about environmental concerns to highlight the collective power of church, community, and campus groups to make a change in caring for creation. Sharing real-life stories, Lowe illustrates God's plan for his world and our place in it, and offers practical action ideas.





How Green Should We Be?

Additional Resources

Our Father's World: Mobilizing the Church to Care for Creation by Edward R. Brown (InterVarsity Press, 2008; 184 pages). Global warming, species on the edge of extinction, deforestation, dwindling resources . . . the earth is in trouble. How should Christians respond to the environmental crisis? Practical and passionate, Brown provides a "godly and green" model for "environmental missions." Discover how to exercise good ecological stewardship and transform your corner of the world.

Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship by Tri Robinson (Ampelon Publishing, 2006; 160 pages). In this book, pastor and author Tri Robinson clearly shows the biblical mandate for environmental stewardship—and how doing so will change the world around us. Not only does he make a compelling case for placing great importance on caring for God's creation, he also shows how it can become an incredible tool for evangelism.

Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action by J. Matthew Sleeth (Zondervan 2007; 256 pages). Constantly treating chronic illnesses that seemed linked to the earth's increasingly diseased environment, physician Sleeth made a dramatic decision. Discover how his family gave away more than half their possessions, adopted a simpler lifestyle—and gained richer relationships, healthier bodies, and a deeper faith in Christ.



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