

Christianity and climate change: a film series




Accompanying discussion
questions and further actions

tearfund

Study One:

What the Bible says about the natural world

 'What is your understanding from the Bible of how God views the natural world?'



Discussion questions

1. *'The physical matters to God.'* To what extent is that true and how does God show this?
2. God commissioned humanity in Genesis 1:28: *"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*
What is your understanding of the word *radah* (translated as "rule") in this verse?
3. Do we tend to think of creation as something "other" than us? If so, what damage can this way of thinking cause?
4. What can each of us do to move from being egocentric (considering humans to be at the "top of the pile" with the rest of nature beneath) or ecocentric (considering humans to be no more important than or different from every other living thing), to being theocentric (considering humans have a special role in protecting and caring for all living things)?
5. Read **Leviticus 25:1–7**. What do these verses tell us about sustainable stewardship of creation, and how does that relate to our care for people?

Study Two:

Climate change is a poverty issue

Q 'How is climate change affecting the developing world where organisations like Tearfund work?'



Discussion questions

1. We often think of climate change as a distant issue that affects polar bears or future generations, but in reality, it is here now, affecting us in ways that matter to all of us. How are we being affected by climate change in New Zealand? What infrastructure do we have to protect us from extreme weather events?
2. Katharine uses the example of a camel that is “malnourished, underfed, in poor health and already overloaded”. How useful is this image in relation to poverty?
3. Katharine compares climate change to a hole in a bucket: if we don't patch that hole, the money we spend on other great needs, such as education or farming, will not take people out of poverty. What do you think about that?
4. *'Climate change is not only an environmental issue. Climate change is a poverty issue. It's a hunger issue. It's an issue of inequality and injustice. It's a human issue. And that's why we care.'* Is this how you think of climate change, or have you seen it as more of an environmental issue?

Study Three:

How to persuade others to care about climate change

Q 'Do you have any advice on how we help fellow Christians understand the importance of working to end climate change?'



Discussion questions

1. 'We haven't connected the dots between what we care about and how that's being affected by climate change.' What do you care deeply about? Can you make any connection to the thing you care about and climate change?
2. We all depend on God's creation for the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Yet, we often think that you have to be a certain type of person (an "environmentalist" or a "tree hugger") to care about the climate. What can you do to talk more about climate change?
3. Do you think humans fail to recognise or underestimate the severity of distant threats? If you know that climate change is affecting people in Africa daily, do you think it matter less in New Zealand?
4. Do you think the solutions to climate change sound worse than its impacts because they mean you will have to change how you live now?

Study Four:

What we can do as a church?

Q *‘What advice would you give churches that want to do something together to combat the effects of climate change?’*



Discussion questions

1. Katharine Hayhoe says that the first thing every one of us can do about climate change is to talk about it—why it matters and what we can do to fix it. Do you think it is important to talk about climate change in your church? Can you think of ways to do this?
2. What changes has your church made, and what changes have you made to reduce your carbon footprint? What else could you do at your church to “act in community” to help tackle climate change? Are there particular things you can do to make your community aware that you are acting?
3. Have you found any resources (organisations, authors, podcasts etc.) that you can share to help others to reduce their carbon footprint? Are there ways that your church could facilitate the sharing of information and resources for sustainable living?
4. How would you lead a church service on climate change if you had the opportunity?

Study Five:

Speaking to other Christians about climate change

Q *‘What are the ways in which we can engage in the climate change debate and gently point people to Jesus?’*



Discussion questions

1. Katharine says we should not engage with the issue of climate change out of guilt, because as Christians, we believe we are freed from guilt. Did that make you realise that guilt plays a part in how you respond to climate change? How does the gospel alter this response?
2. Are there times when we have tried to make other people feel guilty? What was their reaction?
3. How would it look to have climate change conversations born out of love with a) other Christians and b) non-Christians?
4. How can we empower people to act? Are there other skills or tools they may require?
5. Troubles help us learn not to give up because, as Christians, we have hope (Romans 5:3–5). How does that motivate you in relation to the global issue of climate change?

Study Six:

Grateful for fossil fuels but time to move on

Q *'You are based in Texas, one of the centres of the oil industry, how do you engage with Christians who may take a very different view than you do regarding climate change?'*



Discussion questions

1. Do you have negative feelings about climate change campaigners? Do you think it is because the movement has been framed as an alternate type of religion which offends us as followers of Christ, as Katharine suggests?
2. Were you surprised that Katharine said she was grateful for fossil fuels and their role in ending slavery, increasing life expectancy and so on, when our consumption of them has done so much damage to the planet?
3. Can you think of ways that Christians can engage positively in campaigning on climate change?
4. Katharine says in the film that constructive conversations only happen when we connect over something we share. Can you think of ways to connect with other Christians who do not feel the need to move away from fossil fuels?

Study Seven:

Climate change is a threat multiplier

Q *'Katharine, it goes without saying that these are very trying times we are living through. Some people might suggest that there are more important issues for us to be thinking about right now. So, how do we ensure that care for creation and climate change remain not only on the agenda, but high up the agenda?'*



Discussion questions

1. Do you see the coronavirus pandemic and climate change as an equal threat to our health, the planet and those in poverty?
2. What biblical reasons can you think of as to why the church should act – which includes prayer and preaching – on climate change? (For reference, see: Psalm 24:1; Psalm 115:16; Psalm 145:9; Matthew 10:29–31; Psalm 72:12; Philippians 2:4.)
3. Why do you think tackling climate change is not a priority for many Christians, and do you think you can do more to change that?
4. What do you imagine it is like for the poorest people in the world who daily face the consequences of climate change?

Study Eight:

There can be a better future

Q *‘What are some key changes you hope happen after lockdown procedures ease up in terms of climate change-related behaviour?’*



Discussion questions

1. Have you found it is possible to live a different or greener way during lockdown, and do you intend to continue some of these more climate-friendly ways of living post-pandemic?
2. Katharine says that when it comes to recovering from the pandemic and fixing climate change, what we most lack is a vision of a better future. Did this challenge you, and in what ways?
3. Do you think the better future Katharine speaks of is possible e.g. cities full of trees and moist, clean air? What do you think it would take to get us to that point where we all live as good stewards of the land and care for each other?
4. What are the things that you value most in life? What are those values based on? Can you think of new ways to live differently that are more consistent with your values?

Study Nine:

It's not too late

Q *'Given the trajectory in our use of greenhouse gases and the global rise in temperature, is it already too late to react? Will the temperature continue to rise no matter what we do?'*





Discussion questions

1. Have you ever spoken to any politicians about climate change? If we are to see effective policy change and help those already being impacted, politicians need to believe it is a priority for voters. Only in this way can we help ensure they create green jobs, as well as shaping a better future for our children. Could you see yourself making it more of a political priority for yourself and raising it with your elected representatives?
2. Do you think of prayer as acting? As Christians, we believe that prayer makes a difference. Have you prayed about poverty and climate? Is it regularly prayed about at your church, or could you be the person who encourages that?
3. The oil and gas (also known as fossil fuels) sector is one of the most polluting globally, yet it employs many thousands of people around the world. How can the Church promote a just transition away from fossil fuels, which doesn't leave anyone behind?
4. What role, if any, do you think the Church has in caring for people whose livelihoods depend on the oil and gas industry?



This guide was graciously provided by Tearfund UK and adapted for audiences in New Zealand.

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