



Christian Stewardship and Global Warming: The Controversy "Part 1: God and Global Warming" - (September-October, 2007)

Editor's Note: this article on global warming was submitted by a reader who wishes to remain anonymous. Christians, of course, are expected to practice good stewardship with the gifts God has given us, but there still is a strong minority view regarding global warming. We have been requested to also present the minority view, which in this case is a summary by the editor of an article by creationist author and meteorologist, Michael Oard, who urges caution. Part 2 is: "Human-Caused Global Warming Slight"

"God and Global Warming"

The Environmental movement has grown with renewed momentum in recent years, due largely to the increased attention on Global Warming. This movement has several important lessons and exciting opportunities for Christians today. Too often we take the fatalist look at life which says, "God is coming soon, why should we worry about the environment? The world will not last long enough for our actions to make a difference." (see Revelation 22:20) or "everything will be destroyed anyway, what does it matter if this destruction happens sooner?" (see 2 Peter 3:10) Other views may include "God will take care of it anyways so we don't need to worry about the environment" (See Genesis 8:22). These views may have some truth to them, yet they miss out on our responsibilities as human beings to care for the world. They also miss out on a wonderful evangelism opportunity in America and the world today. This paper will document our responsibility as Christians and will provide evangelism ideas for us to take advantage of.

This first point to consider is whether and to what extent we are responsible for the earth and how that ought to translate into our actions today. Adam and Eve were given a job by God "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28). These are the first recorded words of God to Adam and Eve, presumably spoken on the 6th day of Creation. Adam and Eve were created to take care of the earth. This responsibility is as old as humankind. Earth is God's creation and we are to respect it. Too often we overlook this duty we have. We may claim Christian freedom allows us to do what we want. (However, see 1 Corinthians 8:13. This is not to promote vegetarianism. Rather the point is that we must give up our Christian freedom if it means more souls in heaven.) Other times we, as churches, present a false choice to ourselves (that is, if we even take environmental considerations into account when making decisions.) After all, has it ever been suggested when a church is replacing its furnace to use the most environmentally friendly model? Too often, if not always, the choice is made to purchase the cheapest appliances "to allow more money for missions." This is a false dilemma considering we do not then spend the difference on missions. If we did, then it would be a legitimate concern. It is also misleading because we really do have the resources for both environmentally efficient appliances at church and for missions. This is not to burden consciences of those who may not have considered this when installing a heater at church. It is rather to step back and take a look at what stewardship really is. Stewardship is often discussed only when there are budget shortfalls at any given church, school, synod level, etc. Stewardship is much more than giving money to church; it is taking care of all of the gifts God has entrusted to us and not wasting any of them—whether the earth, our wallets, our time, etc (See Matthew 25:14-30). Some people may claim that I am making a big deal out of a fairly small point. Any damage we do to the environment may be insignificant with regard to the big picture. Here it is important to take a look at what God says about what is significant and insignificant when it comes to nature. Here is what Jesus says in Matthew 6:26: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Again he says in chapter 10 verse 29, "Are not two sparrows sold for a

penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.” Twice Jesus describes God's care for even the seemingly most insignificant animals, birds worth half a cent, that God still keeps track of—each and every one of them— making sure they are fed and taken care of. The point of both of these passages is that since God cares so much for these little insignificant creatures, he also cares so much more about us. However, the conclusion loses all of its weight if we attempt to deny the premise it rests on (God DOES care for all of his creation). I hope this has sufficiently established that God does care about his creation and we also get to care for that creation whether through Environmental activism, planting trees, actively fighting Global Warming, or passively being sure that we are not being wasteful and harmful to God's creation. With the importance established for ourselves we now can look to others—not to make them environmentalists but to share Christianity with them. There may be any number of reasons for us to choose or to not choose any of the forms of environmentalism listed above. However, there may be several other reasons why we ought to select certain ones carefully as it is a great opportunity to reach out to others.

Environmentalism may be traced to any number of people from John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt in the late 1800's and early 1900's to the renewed movement in the 1970's to the again renewed interest with the idea of Global Warming. The environment is on a lot of people's minds. This is especially true on college campuses among students and professors alike. Muir's early Environmentalism was very religious. In chapter 6 of *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (1916), Muir describes the importance of having a proper view of Creation and the Creator in order to understand life. He underscores the importance of understanding that all of God's creation is important—from plants and bugs all the way to humans. He also recognized that this understanding is often ignored, similarly to what is described above. A true understanding of Creation is necessary for Environmentalism to succeed. More importantly, however, is the fact that a correct understanding of Creation, the Creator and the Savior is necessary for Environmentalists to survive the next life. Many of these people with the environment on their mind fail to understand why nobody truly cares enough about the environment to make any real change. When they believe that they are just here for this life, there is no motivation to make a difference. Their failures show them that something is missing in many of their lives. We have what they need. Not only can we show them how “Creationism” helps their cause. We can show them that our Creator also gave his life and came back to life so that we can spend an eternity with him. God's love for us goes so much farther than providing a place for us to live. God has also provided a place for us to spend eternity. In my own experiences, I have found the environment to be a great conversation starter to explain how wonderful God's Creation is and how much God loves us. This, then, naturally flows into conversations about how God loved us so much that he sent his Son for us and brought him back to life so that we can spend forever in heaven with him. Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 9:21-23 how he became all things to all men in order to try to reach as many people as he could with the Gospel. This is a great example for us. Often times we do become like other people—in worship styles, worship times, learning their language, etc. in order to try to reach more people with the Gospel. Why not try becoming Environmentalists to win the Environmentalists? This is not to suggest that we all can and must do this. If we all became Environmentalists, we would be missing out on tons of other opportunities. However, we can begin by making small changes—not wasting, keeping the planet in our considerations, showing that we do care and that it does fit well with our faith. This may be a great outreach opportunities for Campus Ministries to consider. If they began student organizations as Christians who cared for the Environment it would be a great testimony to their faith and a great ADDITIONAL opportunity to reach out besides what they are already doing. God cares about every creature he has created—even every little bird. More importantly, God cares about every soul he has created—even those who only seem to care about the environment. Let's take this opportunity, when we have it, to reach many more people with God's love. *LSI*