

## Chapter 12

# CORE VALUE #7: THE ENVIRONMENT AND GLOBAL WARMING

### *CAN WE BEAT THE HEAT?*

In recent years we found ourselves confronted by an increasingly alarming approach to the issue of environmental stewardship from some within the leadership ranks of our movement. In response, we helped draft a private letter addressed to the chairman of the board of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), Dr. L. Roy Taylor, asking that the NAE confer with other Christian groups regarding its increasingly dissonant stance on the issue of global warming. Very unfortunately, this letter was leaked to the press, by whom we do not know, and its contents appeared on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. Our attempt to bring unity to evangelicals on the issue of environmental stewardship had inadvertently created more division. The media, ever willing to herald the crack-up of our movement, pounced on the letter and attempted to drum up as much division as it could within our ranks.

Because Harry was a part of this attempt to bring unity to the conservative Christian movement, he was asked to discuss global warming on CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°*. Another evangelical minister, Rev. Jim Ball, president and CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network, presented the case of evangelicals who believe that global warming and the environment are among the most important issues of our day. Harry winced

when he originally received the invitation because he knew the host or the producers likely wanted to see a brawl between Christian brothers on the issue of global warming. After talking about the interview with Tony and several other evangelical leaders, Harry decided that he would not let the session dissolve into a name-calling contest. He would not be baited into attacking one of his fellow evangelicals. Rather, he would approach the opportunity seeking to bring peace and unity when possible. But he was all too aware that the reporters could cast him as a Neanderthal or, worse, a mean-spirited, religious zealot.

As a nonscientist, Harry also wanted to avoid trying to sort through the research or declaring that he had some kind of epiphany or divine revelation concerning global warming. Few of the people debating global warming are scientists, and that most definitely includes us. But all too often Christians and opponents of the radical environmentalist agenda are made to look like we are antiscience. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we shall see.

Thankfully, the Anderson Cooper interview came off without any bitter fighting or name-calling between Harry and the other guests, though the debate was informative and even sharp at times. Since that time, we have been considering how the evangelical movement can retain its unity in its approach to this issue. We have also become more aware and more concerned about the underlying philosophy of the radical environmental agenda and how it may actually lead people away from God and into humanism. We approach this topic now with a strong desire to set the stage for our movement's success on this issue in the years to come. The environment does not need to be a wedge issue that our opponents use to drive us apart. Rather, we can stand together on common ground, taking a principled and balanced approach to the stewardship of our planet and environment, while avoiding the at times egregious policies and philosophies put forth by green evangelists, for whom the environment has almost become a secular religion.

Polls tell us that the environment is at the bottom of most evangelicals' concerns. This doesn't mean evangelicals don't care about proper stewardship of the planet, just that they don't see it as the most pressing issue facing our nation. If you are like us, with so many contradicting voices on this topic, you've probably been scratching your head wondering who to believe. Or maybe you've just decided to ignore the issue. As we begin this chapter, we want to make clear that we do not hold ourselves out to be

scientific experts on the topics of pollution, the environment, and global warming. But we have both made it a point to study the issue of global warming because of its growing importance in public policy discussions. In this chapter we want to look at the claims being made about global warming and report our take on the solutions that are being trumpeted around the world. We will follow our analysis by a look at what the Bible has to say about our environmental responsibilities and specifically the issue of global warming.

Let us state our positions right up front. We are for good stewardship of this planet God has given to us to inhabit. We are for good science that can help us measure our stewardship efforts. We are for good policies. We are for clean forests and unpolluted lakes, air, and oceans. We believe there is little true division within the religious Right, or in the population at large, over what kind of environment we want to live in. What causes the division is some people's rush to bad conclusions, bad science, bad policy, and bad results.

### **How Warm Is It Really?**

One morning in the fall of 2005 as Tony was headed to a breakfast meeting with then U.S. Senator Rick Santorum, he was glancing through the *New York Times* on the way to the Capitol. A full-page ad by Allstate Insurance caught his eye. Large dominos were lined up and trailing out of the picture. Each domino bore a year, beginning with 2006. A man was peering out from behind the domino marked 2006, and the domino was beginning to tilt backward toward the 2007 domino, which upon falling would cause a chain reaction. The ad read, "Eight Out of the 10 Largest U.S. Catastrophes Have Happened in the Last Four Years. Are We Ready To Deal With The Next Four?" It then went on to address proposed legislation.

That ad, and the fear it seemed to promote, reflected the current debate over the environment. Fear seems to have trumped reason. Quick, drastic solutions seem to draw favor while measured, studied approaches are tossed out because of the so-called urgency of the situation. When even a major insurance company is caught up in what amounts to scare tactics, you know that fear is gripping an entire society.

But the science about global warming is a tangled mess. Some people, including well-respected scientists, are convinced that the data point to human-caused warming. Other people, including well-respected scientists,

say nothing is happening to the climate that doesn't normally happen in the earth's fluctuating temperature cycle. There are zealots on both sides who won't listen to anyone who opposes them, and there are also reasonable people on both sides. Unfortunately, many of the reasonable voices seem drowned out, not by melting glaciers, but by fear, panic, even hatred. Muddled reporting on the issue makes it even worse.

The planet's average global temperature is increasing one degree Fahrenheit every thirty years. On average in the past, the temperature has risen by about one degree Fahrenheit per century. Over the past fifty years the increase has been twice this rate. There is a widely accepted consensus that the earth is in fact warming. It is the cause of the warming that is in question. Many scientists believe human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels, contributes to the warming. Others say these temperature cycles are related to internal dynamics of ice accumulation and loss. In addition, changes in the tilt of the earth's axis of rotation and the elliptical, rather than circular, path of the earth's orbit may also contribute to these changes.

Global warming alarmists claim that it will cause a host of planetary disasters. We are told, for example, that sea levels will rise because of melting ice caps and glaciers, causing catastrophic flooding. Al Gore's documentary film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, shows a large part of New York City underwater as a result of sea levels rising twenty feet. But Jim McCarthy, the head of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and a Harvard University professor, questions Gore's claims: "There is no reasonable climate scenario whereby this is likely to happen in the next century or two," he told us. "However, three feet of sea level rise, which is not at all out of the question for this century, would be devastating for many regions—especially with amplified storminess." It's also worth noting that it is not easy to project the exact impact of climate change upon the sea levels. For example, the UN's climate panel has downgraded their predicted sea rise between now and the year 2100 from nearly three feet to seventeen inches. That didn't get much attention, and certainly there were no sighs of relief from the alarmists. They seem too taken with their ideas to notice. We are not attempting to minimize the potential impact of a rise in sea level. We simply are concerned about the wide numeric discrepancy.

In fairness to Dr. McCarthy, he generally supports Gore's view of the environmental issues of the day. In fact, McCarthy and the thousands of scientists he represents at the AAAS believe that global warming, left

unchecked, will be a major problem in the future. They declare that the overwhelming majority of scientists line up on their side. As far as global warming as a whole is concerned, the issue we have focused upon is what we can do to prevent a loss of human life and unsure, realistic, measurable results. In other words, if we spend \$10 billion, what will we get?

What about the dramatic changes we are seeing in the weather? Some scientists claim that global warming will cause an increase in extreme weather events like Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Dean, and Felix. While there is consensus that there has been an increase in tropical storm activity in the North Atlantic over the last thirty years, there has not been a corresponding increase in tropical storm activity in other regions of the world that would challenge the claim that these storms are the result of human-induced global warming.<sup>1</sup> A study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) found that linking global warming and hurricane intensity was premature.<sup>2</sup>

Other environmental activists warn that there will be an increase in diseases because of increased temperatures and weather-induced migrations. According to a report commissioned by the Center for Naval Analyses, “human-driven warming of the climate” will result in an increase in civil unrest globally and as a result poses risks to the security of the United States.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that the idea of weather-induced migration is being included in the military curriculum taught at West Point.

But this present global warming scare was not the first climate panic. In the spring of 1975, *Newsweek* published an article on climate change that read, “There are ominous signs that the earth’s weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production—with serious political implications for just about every nation on earth. The drop in food output could begin quite soon, perhaps only 10 years from now.”<sup>4</sup> The article cited as evidence of radical climate change an experience that both of us can remember living through as young men. On April 4, 1974, the United States experienced the worst outbreak of tornados in U.S. history; 148 twisters touched down in 13 states. Before it was over, 330 people were dead and 5,484 were injured in a damage path covering more than 2,500 miles, evidence (at least to *Newsweek*) that radical climate change was taking place. However, the fear wasn’t of global warming but of global cooling. According to many news reports, the earth was moving into another ice age. Just thirty years later, not only did the ice age not appear, but now we are told the world is on the verge of unprecedented global warming.

Back in the 1970s a pattern was taking place that is similar to the pattern of today. Scientific journals of the day were saying there would likely be warming because of greenhouse effects, sooner than the return of an ice age. But these predictions did not make headlines. Rather, people were fixated on global cooling. Similarly, all scientists nowadays don't agree on how to handle global warming. No wonder it has been difficult to create clear-cut plans of action that synchronize local, regional, and international environment agendas. In the present, as in the past, we often get a blend of media hype and personal prejudice. Unfortunately for the nation, the media seem to have a script already written, which may or may not be completely accurate.

Take, for example, the story of John Coleman, long-time meteorologist and founder of the Weather Channel. According to Coleman, the science that supports arguments favoring global warming "has been manipulated" and much of the data has been "manufactured," resulting in what he calls "bad science" that, unfortunately, passed peer review.<sup>5</sup> He states that natural cycles in weather are more responsible for any climate change, and that over the next two decades there is an equal chance for a cooling trend as there is for a warming trend. He also believes that once the dire predictions of some of our environmental scientists fail to occur, people will realize they have been "duped."

Other experts remain unconvinced of any major human culpability in the global warming phenomenon at all. Such a contrarian view of global warming is offered by Dennis T. Avery, an environmental economist, and S. Fred Singer, a physicist and professor from the University of Virginia. In their book *Unstoppable Global Warming—Every 1,500 Years*, they point out that the earth moves in 1,500-year cycles of significant warming and cooling. The earth warms, and then it cools, it warms again, and then it cools again. Could it be that that is the way that God designed the earth?

In a study of the media's coverage of "climate change," R. Warren Anderson and Dan Gainor examined how major media outlets covered the issue of climate change over the last one-hundred-plus years.<sup>6</sup> What they discovered was that there have been four climate change scares; a concern over global cooling beginning in 1895, followed by fears of global warming in 1929, only to be replaced by alarm over global cooling; now we are back to global warming. With each succeeding crisis, the call for a government solution has grown louder and louder.

Why the flip-flop in the media and among alarmists? We are not sure, except that once a sensational story runs its course, they need another.

Despite their best efforts, the global warming alarmists have yet to convince most Americans that we are facing a crisis. A *crisis* is defined as an unstable condition requiring an abrupt or decisive decision or change. It essentially moves the matter to the top of the list of public concerns, diverting limited resources away from other issues such as health care, national defense, protection against terrorism, and education. However, they do have their “solutions” waiting in the wings, and these solutions mostly involve more and greater government intervention. But with global warming, the solution is bigger than even the federal government; the solution must be global. Alarmists propose grand, sweeping, global policies that ask nations to surrender their national sovereignty. Environment zealots, like political ideologues, rarely come up with good solutions. In our opinion, and the opinion of the American public, environmental alarmists have failed to present a clear case concerning how much money must be spent to “fix” the problem.

In global warming, some people have found their life cause; unfortunately, it may lead to spiritual imbalance and even deception.

## Jesus and Global Warming

The Bible gives two clear points of reference for an environmental theology. The first discourse about creation comes from Genesis, while the second can be inferred from the teaching of Christ. In the beginning, Adam was given stewardship over both the Garden of Eden, in particular, and Earth, in general. He was called to take oversight or dominion over Earth. The word *dominion* (*radh*) in the Hebrew means to tread down, that is, to subjugate. In the King James Version, it especially means to prevail against, reign, or rule over.<sup>7</sup> As we discuss the global environmental issues of our day, there is a great need for the church to take an active stewardship role. We must exercise dominion and lead the way in the caring for the earth. We cannot simply repeat the new mantra, “I do not believe in global warming,” even if we don’t. We have a responsibility to encourage our political leaders and scientists to give real options for bettering our stewardship of this planet God has given to us to tend and rule over.

The second Hebrew word used by the Lord to describe man’s interaction with the earth is the word *subdue*. The Hebrew word here is *kabash*.<sup>8</sup>

It means to conquer or subjugate by force. In the King James Version of the Bible, it carries a meaning of keeping something under, subduing, or bringing into subjection. We must never forget that as the planet changes and goes through various cycles, our call to subdue the earth never changes. As a practical matter, this would mean that we should treat the matter of working with nature and the earth as someone would approach breaking a horse or taming a wild animal. Wisdom, strength, focus, and even force may be necessary to exert our will over the planet. Scientists are in the position to tell us what should be done. Theologians, however, are in the best position to tell us what should be done morally. Politicians are in the best position to determine what should be done practically. However, everyone on the planet, as well as the animals and plants, will benefit from the right things being done.

In the New Testament, Jesus Himself actually has something to say about the changes in the weather and our environment. Although He does not mention global warming directly, He does help us perhaps understand the role disruptions in our weather patterns may play in the days leading up to His return. In the twenty-first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus discusses with His disciples what is going to happen in the future—the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurs in A.D. 70, and His second coming to the earth. Jesus makes clear to them that they need to be able to discern the times by looking at the signs so they will not be deceived by what others are saying and they will not be surprised.

And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

—LUKE 21:7-12



We believe it is possible that Jesus is referring to dramatic, national weather changes in this passage. These could be related to the famines and pestilence He says will come. While we cannot state scientifically that there is a direct correlation between pestilence and famine and global warming, it is not unreasonable to see them as linked. The word *pestilence* (Greek *loimos*<sup>9</sup>) is a plague—literally a disease or figuratively a pest. During a recent trip to Alaska, Harry observed a major natural change in which beetles ate up miles of forest as the old natural order in that area was altered due to climate changes.

Notice that Jesus warns us that there will be “fearful sights” in the earth and “great signs” in the heavens. Amazingly, the Greek word for fear (*phobetron*) comes from a root word from which terror and terrorism come. Jesus was literally telling His disciples over two thousand years ago that there will be acts of terror preceding His second coming. In addition, according to Jesus, there will also be great signs from heaven or astrological occurrences, eclipses, falling stars, and comets.

It’s possible that the End-Time signs that Jesus referred to were part of God’s warning the world of His imminent return. This declaration is not meant to be fatalistic; it is meant to alert us to the fact that we are entering into “crunch time” or the last phase of the game. Professional football teams often practice something called the two-minute drill. This drill includes the plays that are reserved for the critical last two minutes of the game. When the two-minute signal is given, the best teams know what to do. From the above passage of scripture, many believers conclude that the following things should be signs of the second coming of Christ:

- ▶ Increased civil disturbances (v. 9)
- ▶ Increase in war (v. 10)
- ▶ Extreme weather events (v. 11)
- ▶ Famines (v. 11)
- ▶ Pestilence (v. 11)
- ▶ Acts of terror (v. 11)
- ▶ Unusual astronomical events (v. 11)

Did you notice that what Jesus warned would occur in the last days are almost identical to what some global warming theorists are saying is going to happen?

<b>God's Warning vs. Global Warming</b>	
Increase in civil disturbances <sup>10</sup>	Increase in civil disturbances and security threats <sup>11</sup>
Increase in war <sup>12</sup>	Nuclear war <sup>13</sup>
Extreme weather events <sup>14</sup>	Extreme weather events <sup>15</sup>
Famines <sup>16</sup>	Famines <sup>17</sup>
Pestilence <sup>18</sup>	Pestilence/disease <sup>19</sup>
Acts of terror <sup>20</sup>	Increase in terrorism <sup>21</sup>

Jesus also said there will be an increase in spiritual deception that is intended to get Christians off our game and render us ineffective when we should be running our two-minute drill. Deceived people are, by definition, not in tune with the priorities of Christ's kingdom. They put their faith in something other than God. And this is exactly what environmental alarmists ask us to do. The language they use and the policies they promote are humanistic. How many times have you heard them appeal to others to "help save the planet"? The whole premise of the statement presupposes that mankind is ultimately in charge of the fate of our planet. It springs from the same idea that we can save ourselves and that we don't need the atoning work of Christ on the cross. If the problems of pollution, the environment, and global warming are man-made, their logic goes, then the solution can be man-made too. We don't need God. If undue focus on the environment is indeed a type of spiritual deception, then its proponents are conditioning people to look to government and to the powers of man—not God—to save them.

It is disheartening to see some Christians unwittingly embrace the environmentalist agenda without looking seriously at its philosophical underpinnings. As believers in Jesus Christ we should not be fearful. Knowing that there will be efforts to deceive the church and Christians in the last days, true believers should be careful to whom they listen. John 10:27 reads, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me." John states in 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not perfect in love." David reflects on this truth in Psalm 46 when he says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled,

though the mountains shake with its swelling” (vv. 1–3, NKJV). No matter what happens, even if the mountains are thrown into the seas, God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in a time of trouble. Therefore, He will not be gripped by fear. Likewise we should not be gripped by fear, nor should we act rashly because of fear.

## Population Control?

Just as alarming to us as the potential subjugation of our nation’s economy to a global body, and the potential spiritual deception we have just discussed, are the adjacent calls for population control as part of the global warming solution. We are concerned that human life will be devalued in order to “protect the ecosystem.” As believers, we must make sure that population control is not chosen as a way of balancing out the CO<sub>2</sub> equation.

Population control is a loaded term that includes not only abortion, contraception, and sterilization, but also infanticide and promotion of same-sex relations. Women from China have testified before the U.S. Congress of forced abortions, as late as nine months into the pregnancy, as well as forced sterilizations because of China’s population control measures.

It is hard to imagine that there are evangelical leaders who are calling for population control in response to the global warming crisis. In a speech delivered to the World Bank in May of 2006, the vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals, Rich Cizik, said, “I’d like to take on the population issue, but in my community global warming is the third rail issue. I’ve touched the third rail . . . but still have a job. And I’ll still have a job after my talk here today. But population [control] is a much more dangerous issue to touch. . . . We need to confront population control and we can—we’re not Roman Catholics, after all—but it’s too hot to handle now.”<sup>22</sup>

Before including Rev. Cizik’s comments here, we verified with him that the comments were true. He responded by saying the comments were a part of a question-and-answer period and do not reflect his record in support of life. We therefore believe his comments were well intended. But that does not allay our concern that these kinds of comments could lead other evangelicals into the deception of the radical environmental movement. Some may even go as far as to fail to function as watchmen who are to protect the human life. Our concern is more than just a matter of semantics. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that God’s instruction to man to be fruitful

and multiply had an expiration date that has passed. At the heart of the push for population control is an unbiblical view of children and of life. David makes clear that children are the “heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of thy youth” (Ps. 127:3–4). Rather than being a drain on our limited resources, children represent the potential of the future. While we applaud Richard Cizik’s zeal and commitment to trumpet his message to the nations, we think that each believer must be concerned about his focus and priorities. We, the evangelical community, have needed Richard Cizik’s input to wake us up. But now we need to continue to engage Cizik and other Christian environmentalists in a closed-door discussion about the practical next steps that this message should take.

The present call for population control by secular environmental activists is not unlike the warnings sounded by Thomas Malthus in 1798, who said the world’s growing population was growing exponentially while the earth’s food supply could at best be increased only arithmetically. According to Malthus, the population would soon overtax the planet’s ability to sustain the human race. He argued for policies that would result in a decreased population among the poor classes. He warned that if both private and public policies to limit population were not enacted and wars did not decrease the population, disease and famine would. He obviously underestimated the power of “witty inventions” (Prov. 8:12) that fueled the Industrial Revolution and increased the average yield per acre.

Beyond the devaluing of children, population control says we have all we are ever going to have, and we know all we are ever going to know, so we must therefore allocate what we do have so we don’t run out. There is nothing in history that suggests that to be true of the world God created for us.

A similar warning was sounded in 1968. Stanford University professor Paul R. Ehrlich, in his book *The Population Bomb*, predicted millions of people would die of starvation in the 1970s and 1980s without population control.<sup>23</sup> The hysteria created by Ehrlich paved the way for the United Nation’s Population Fund, which was established in 1969. Ehrlich believed that those nations who refused to institute his population controls were willing to let citizens of those nations starve to death. He also believed that Indian men who had more than three children should be sterilized by force.<sup>24</sup> Fortunately for us, Ehrlich was not a prophet. Virtually nothing he wrote came to pass.

Global population control became a major focus of the United Nations as they projected the planet to be overrun with 11.5 billion people. The UN now admits that the human race that now stands at 6.6 billion people will fall far short of their projections and peak at 8.5 billion. Demographers say that once the population peaks, it will start a long-term decline because of falling birth rates.

Even though the fertility rate is declining across the board in Western nations, it is the most Christian nations that have the highest birth rates. Ireland has the highest fertility rate among the European Union countries with a rate of 1.86 births per average woman. The United States stands out among the industrialized nations with a fertility rate of 2.1 children per female, a rate that is declining but is still higher than most. The U.S. rate is higher in part because of religious conservatives who have a higher-than-average fertility rate.<sup>25</sup>

Christian conservatives, however, are not keeping pace with Muslims, who have the highest fertility rates. For instance, Muslims in Europe have a fertility rate that is three times higher than non-Muslims, leading some like Islam scholar Bernard Lewis to predict Europe will have Muslim majorities by the end of the twenty-first century at the latest.

We are beginning to see the long-term consequences on the horizon for seeing children as the consumers of limited resources rather than a reward and heritage from Lord.

## **The Bible and the Environment**

Unfortunately, a number of religious leaders have joined the alarmist crusade and are attempting to make the environment the most important issue in the church. In some ways they are correct in pushing for the church to get involved. In other ways, many of them are like the young prophet who ran to King David before he heard the message. (See 2 Samuel 18:22–28.) They have zeal and a desire to change things, but they do not have the message that the church needs at this time. There has to be a clear, proven approach to protecting the environment and forestalling the damages of global warming.

We must be positive and deliberate in our stewardship of this planet, not just to fulfill God's mandate to us, but so we can maintain the moral high ground in our society. While environmental issues remain a low priority for most evangelicals, it is an issue of increasing interest among

young people, evangelicals included. Young people see stewardship of the environment as a basic responsibility of our civic leaders. If we are reactionary or disdainful toward those on the other side of us on this issue, we risk alienating the next generation. It is time for the church to add their voice to the discussion of environmental issues without adopting the at times godless tactics, agenda, and philosophy of the more extreme alarmists. In shaping our future environmental agenda, we will need to hear from Richard Cizik, Jim Ball, Carl Betsner, and a host of other committed Christians. We believe we can have a strong, balanced, reasonable agenda that will gain far more support from Americans than the alarm-based agenda now being offered.

The Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1). In other words, nature and science belong to God. They reveal His glory. They are an extension of Him. They do not compete with His current work in the earth. Rather, science completes the revelation of God—it does not compete. In fact, some of the most devout Christians we have ever met have been born-again scientists. We want to make it perfectly clear that we are pro-science. Scientists are not the enemy of the conservative community on the issue of the environment.

Our biggest challenge is to set forth clear steps of action that are in the best interests of our nation and the world. We would both describe ourselves as conservationists, and here we believe there is much common ground for Christians and all Americans to stand on even if we disagree on other aspects of the debate. While we’ve made great progress in the last twenty-five years of cleaning up our air and water, everyone can agree that we can still do more. Every day people such as asthma sufferers can attest to the fact that automobile emissions, industrial waste, and factory fumes impact people’s health. The same goes for polluted water sources.

There are other policies we can promote as well. We have all heard the exhortations from civic leaders to use energy more efficiently by running the air conditioning less, keeping our water heaters at lower temperatures, planting trees to give cooling shade, and buying cars that get good gas mileage. As mundane as this sounds, these things do make a difference. It is interesting to note that because of the state’s standards program on conservation and energy reduction, California’s per capita electricity consumption has not increased since 1978. The rest of the country has increased 50 percent on average.<sup>26</sup> This has not diminished the standard of living for Californians, but it has helped the environment.

Here are some other basics. Don't litter. It sounds simplistic, but litter remains a serious problem. Roadside litter alone costs an estimated \$115 million a year to remove. We can all conserve electricity by turning off lights when they are not in use. Reduce the number of miles you drive by better planning of your commute and/or errands. Consider carpooling or taking public transportation if it is available. In Washington DC you can *slug*. Slugging is a unique form of commuting. If you don't have a car or someone to carpool with, you simply stand in a designated area and a total stranger in need of another person or two to qualify for the high-occupancy lane (HOV) will pick you up. Slugging can certainly make for some interesting rides!

We also believe the church can and should provide leadership on this issue because it affects national security. The war in Iraq and our challenge with global terrorism make America more vulnerable because of our dependence upon foreign oil. This must be overcome. We have been "tithing to terror," as one scientist put it, by allowing nearly 60 percent of our oil to come from foreign sources. Reducing consumption and diversifying sources will simultaneously increase national security and help appease the cry of environmentalists. Expanded nuclear power and more efficient use of the present facilities should be part of this comprehensive energy strategy. For instance, we can increase the effectiveness of the output of our existing nuclear power plants by using heated water that comes from these reactors, just as European nations do, rather than discharging it. This would reduce our use of less efficient fossil fuels.

We should also remind people that until we get a clearer, measurable game plan for reducing global warming, we should avoid spending huge amounts of money on unproven solutions. Those dollars could go toward other global problems for which we have more immediate answers, such as sickness and poverty. Every dollar we spend on a perhaps chimerical crusade to decrease global temperature is a dollar we can't spend helping the poor or curing disease. Also, as the scientific research gets better, it may lead us to a two-prong solution that will eliminate some CO<sub>2</sub> emissions while reducing the impact of an ever-warming globe.

Dr. Calvin Beisner, in *A Call to Truth, Prudence and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming*, points out that it would be more cost effective to mitigate the projected effects of global warming on the poor than to spend trillions to reduce carbon emissions.<sup>27</sup> For instance, investing additional dollars to assist developing countries in solving agri-

cultural problems in projected drought areas could have a much greater impact upon hunger than a slight reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Coastal areas vulnerable to flooding, if sea levels rise, could be protected by sea walls or levees at a fraction of the costs of compliance with the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol is a part of a United Nations treaty addressing climate change that was crafted in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. The industrialized nations that are party to the Kyoto Protocol are required to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and five other greenhouse gases by varying degrees before the year 2012. As of today, over 172 countries have ratified this protocol.

Shortly after taking office, President George W. Bush said the United States would not participate in the treaty, and he refused to send it to the U.S. Senate for ratification. President Bush cited the negative economic impact that U.S. compliance with the international treaty would have on the country. If the United States were to ratify the protocol, in order to achieve the mandates under this UN treaty, some have estimated that the United States would have to reduce its present energy use by as much as one-third. Such a reduction in energy use would result in an estimated decline in the Gross Nation Product (GNP) of 1 to 4 percent. For example, Harry visited the Alaskan village of Shishmaref, located on Sarichef Island in the Chukchi Sea just north of the Bering Strait, that will be destroyed within the next decade due to rising temperatures, reduction in sea ice, and thawing of permafrost along the coast. This problem is coming on too quickly for current CO<sub>2</sub> emissions plans to work. Alaskan officials will have to decide how to relocate the natives of this Eskimo settlement who have been there for four thousand years.

As Bible-believing Christians, we should not be gripped or motivated by fear of what the future may hold. We should view the future with optimism, not pessimism. That does not mean that we deny reality; rather, we see these great challenges of our day as an opportunity for God to unlock yet further secrets of His magnificent creation. We should see the challenges of stewardship of this planet as opportunities for other witty inventions that will allow us to pollute less, use less energy, and keep our environment cleaner and healthier.

As Christians we have the opportunity to be a voice of calm in the midst of crisis, whether real or perceived. With the Bible as our guide, we can provide the balanced solution that the world needs on global warming and other environmental ills. The Bible calls us to be good stewards of what



God has given us to inhabit, not to worship the creation but to use our ingenuity to manage it in a way that honor's God's original intentions.

### **Prayer Points**

- ▶ Thank God for the blessing of the beautiful earth where we live. Praise Him for His creative genius to order the seasons and the times of man. Give thanks for the bounty we have in America because of His faithfulness and goodness (Job 5:10).
- ▶ Ask forgiveness that the church has not consistently been a faithful steward in caring for God's creation. Pray that the church would have a proper balance between honoring the Creator and caring for His creation (Job 35:11).
- ▶ Pray that scientists and the church would grow a strong bond to speak to the nation with intelligence and wisdom in terms of our environment. Ask that the Lord would open the ears of leaders in our government to promote public policy that will benefit human life, the family, our economy, and the environment simultaneously.