

# Right or Wrong? Climate change

May 21, 2015

**Some people claim, “Environmentalism is just another religion” to rebut people who link climate change to human activity. What about organizations such as Jesus People Against Pollution, which cite Scripture? Are their views grounded in the Bible?**

I have no doubt organizations that support environmentalism can find strong scriptural foundations. Care for creation is embedded in the creation accounts of Genesis and in Christians’ responsibility to care for the marginalized in society. I have addressed this subject in earlier “Right or Wrong?” articles titled [“Building ‘green’”](#) and [“Going green.”](#)

## **Christians are divided**

Christians are divided over the reality of climate change. Dialogue is sparse. Many are entrenched in their positions. Some reject the strong scientific evidence that climate change is a reality. Instead of addressing the merits of the issue, one response is to accuse the environmentalists of creating a religion that worships the world and nature. This kind of response all but denies the human contribution to climate change. Disparaging environmentalist organizations is improper strategy.

Jesus People Against Pollution is one example of an environmentalist organization with Christian roots. I had not heard about it until asked to respond to this week’s question. A little research provided contact information for Charlotte Keys, its founding executive director. Her concern for environmental justice is personal. In 1977, an explosion at the Reichold Chemical Plant rocked Columbia, Miss., the city where she is a pastor. Investigations following the fire discovered numerous dangerous

chemicals, including Agent Orange. The site was declared a National Superfund Site in 1984 and was removed in 2000 when the EPA completed its work and deleted the site from its national priorities list. Many claim local residents still experience adverse health effects from the site, so advocacy for those affected by the site continues.

### **Biblically grounded**

Jesus People Against Pollution's mission has expanded from its original work with the toxic site to include pollution and climate change. A few moments on the phone with Keys convinced me Jesus People Against Pollution is biblically grounded. You won't hear her using any proof-texts about climate change or toxic dump sites. But she is passionate about her work and about challenging companies who abuse the environment. She spoke of how people ought to love God, be good stewards of God's creation and care about people in the community. She cannot understand how business can act contrary to these principles for the sake of making money.

Jesus People Against Pollution is only one of many organizations that address environmental issues. Two of the better known are the [Evangelical Environmental Network](#) and the [Good Steward Campaign](#). Another group, a broad coalition of evangelical leaders calling themselves the Evangelical Climate Initiative issued a statement in 2006 called "[Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action](#)," which offers both biblical and scientific rationales for addressing environmental issues.

### **Climate statement**

Here a sample of what you'll find in "Climate Change": "Human-induced climate change is real," "the consequences of climate change will be significant and will hit the poor the hardest," "Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem" and "the need to act

now is urgent; governments, businesses, churches, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing climate change—starting now.” Check out the rest for yourself. It’s worth the read.

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