



# GOOD FAITH READ ALONG

***IS CLIMATE ACTION A GOSPEL ISSUE?***

***Dr. Katharine Hayhoe on Faith-  
Based Steps to Better Creation  
Stewardship.***

**A companion guide to Good Faith episode 213.**

***Listen to the Episode Here.***

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

From time to time, the Good Faith podcast goes deeper into topics we feel are of national importance and which, when tackled in good faith, can equip listeners to make a difference. This read-along guide is designed to accompany your listening to the Good Faith conversation with climate scientist and Christian Dr. Katharine Hayhoe. Consider reading it straight through, pausing at different sections while listening, or returning to it after you listen for reflection or group discussion. We hope it encourages you to approach this complex, often controversial, topic with hope, humility, and curiosity.

And a gentle reminder: *You don't need to agree with everything here to engage faithfully.* As with all conversations we host, our goal is not consensus but formation as we help you engage hard questions with honesty, courage, and a sense of agency rather than paralysis.

**"If you think your tribe should hold a certain view, and especially when it becomes a political tribe, then you're not really studying or even processing the science or even trusting the science. You're just going with your identity. Your political and spiritual identity has gotten merged."**

**DR. KATHARINE HAYHOE**



# WHY IS CLIMATE CHANGE SO HARD TO TALK ABOUT? AND IS THE CLIMATE REALLY CHANGING?

For many Christians, climate change isn't just a scientific question. It's an emotional and relational one. Conversations about climate often feel charged with judgment, politics, and fear. That tension can make it easier to disengage than to lean in.

In this episode, Dr. Hayhoe reminds us of an important truth: people don't decide what to believe based on facts alone. We filter information through our identities, values, communities, and experiences. This doesn't make us irrational. Rather, it makes us human.

You likely don't need us to tell you that climate change has become wrapped up with cultural and political identities, especially in the U.S. For some, accepting the science feels like betraying their community. For others, talking about climate feels synonymous with shame, alarmism, or ideological pressure. Very few of you likely enjoy talking about this topic outside of your likeminded bubble.

With all of this in mind, Dr. Hayhoe's approach begins not with blame, but with understanding. If we want better conversations, we need to start by acknowledging why this topic feels so difficult in the first place.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: KICKING THINGS OFF

- When you hear the phrase "climate change", what do you feel first: concern, skepticism, exhaustion, defensiveness, guilt?
- Have you ever felt talked at or judged in a climate conversation? How did that affect your willingness to engage?
- Who do you trust most when it comes to complicated or controversial issues – and why? How do you decide that a source is deserving of your trust?



# IS THIS A FAITH QUESTION ... OR A POLITICAL ONE?

It's easy to assume that climate change is primarily a political issue and therefore something to be debated, legislated, or avoided altogether. But Dr. Hayhoe invites Christians to ask a different question first: What does our faith require of us here?

Scripture is clear that the world we inhabit is not disposable. Creation belongs to God, and from the opening pages of the Bible, humanity is entrusted with its care. Stewardship is not about ownership or control but does speak clearly about our responsibility to tend to what God has made with wisdom and humility.

Yet for Dr. Hayhoe, climate change is not only about caring for the earth. It is also, and perhaps even more urgently, about caring for people.

In fact, climate change is not just an environmental issue. It is a profoundly human one. It acts like a force multiplier, taking existing challenges like poverty, hunger, disease, lack of clean water, and unsafe housing – and making them worse. When crops fail, when heat becomes dangerous, when floods or droughts displace communities, it is the most vulnerable who bear the greatest cost.

And here's where the moral tension sharpens: the people most affected by climate change are often those who have contributed the least to causing it. Meanwhile, those of us living in wealthier nations have been the primary beneficiaries of the systems that drive the problem.

For Dr. Hayhoe, this injustice is what made climate change impossible to separate from her own faith. Remember that Jesus told His disciples that they would be known by their love for others. If that is true, then the question becomes unavoidable: how do we love our neighbors while ignoring a global crisis that disproportionately harms them?

**"When we see ourselves in the solutions and we see solutions that give people more food and water – people who need it, who are hungry, who are currently suffering...then often our objections to the issue evaporate."**

**DR. KATHARINE HAYHOE**



# IS THIS A FAITH QUESTION ... OR A POLITICAL ONE?

This framing doesn't require political uniformity. It doesn't tell Christians exactly which policies to support or oppose, how to heat your home, or what kind of car to drive. But it does insist that faithfulness cannot stop at personal belief. Loving our neighbors means paying attention to the conditions that shape their lives – and being willing to respond when those conditions cause preventable suffering.

For Dr. Hayhoe, studying climate science, sharing what she has learned, and working to reduce harm is not a detour from her faith. Rather, it is an expression of her faith, and a way of walking in the good work God has prepared for her. Might the same be true for you?

Seen this way, climate engagement isn't about saving the planet, signaling virtue, or choosing sides. It's about discipleship: responding to God's world, and God's people, with truth, love, and responsibility.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: FAITH OR POLITICS?

- When you think about climate change, do you tend to think first about the environment or about people? Why?
- How does Jesus' command to love our neighbors shape the way you think about global issues, not just local ones?
- What feels challenging about the idea that those least responsible for climate change are often those most affected by it?
- How might faithfulness look different if climate change is approached as a human and moral issue, not just a political one?



# WHAT THE SCIENCE ACTUALLY SAYS (AND WHAT IT DOESN'T)

*One of the reasons climate change conversations break down is confusion about the science itself. In this conversation, Dr. Hayhoe helps us understand what scientists overwhelmingly agree on – and what is still being debated.*

*Here's the core consensus: the Earth is warming, and human activity (especially the burning of fossil fuels) is the primary driver. This conclusion isn't based on a single study or political agenda, but on decades of evidence gathered by scientists around the world.*

*At the same time, climate science does not claim that every storm, drought, or wildfire is "caused" by climate change. Instead, climate change acts like a heat amplifier that 'loads the dice' such that extreme weather events become ever more likely.*

*Dr. Hayhoe emphasizes that honest science includes (and even welcomes) uncertainty. This is why scientists talk in probabilities, not absolutes. The humility they show in doing so isn't indicative of a weakness. Rather, it's a strength that allows us to speak truthfully without exaggeration or fearmongering.*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: WHO DO YOU TRUST AND HOW DO YOU APPROACH THESE NUANCES?

- What claims about climate change have you found hardest to evaluate or trust?
- How do you usually decide whether scientific information is reliable?
- Do you tend to be more skeptical of certainty – or of uncertainty? Why might that be?



# FROM HELPLESSNESS TO AGENCY: HOW CHANGE ACTUALLY HAPPENS

As the conversation nears its end, Curtis asks Dr. Hayhoe to name one step that almost anyone could take, no matter where they fall on belief, certainty, or concern about climate change.

Her answer is strikingly simple: Have a conversation.

And when do you have that conversation? Not once you've resolved every question. Not once you feel confident or persuasive. But right now. Simply begin. Because without conversation, nothing else can follow.

Dr. Hayhoe points to a pattern seen again and again – in churches, communities, and even globally. Most people assume they are alone in caring about climate change, even when that isn't true. However, two-thirds of people say they are worried about it, yet only about a third talk about it even occasionally. The silence itself creates the illusion that “this isn't something people like us care about.” And that illusion has consequences.



**Two-thirds of people say they are worried about climate change.**



**Yet only about a third talk about climate change even occasionally.**

Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.





# FROM HELPLESSNESS TO AGENCY: HAVING THE HARD CONVERSATIONS

## If You're Feeling Unsure or Overwhelmed

For Christians who feel doubtful, hesitant, or worn down by the scale of the problem, Hayhoe encourages starting not with bad news, but with good news.

You are not alone. Many others care. There are solutions underway. And ordinary people are already making a difference, together. Their hope, Dr. Hayhoe reminds us, does not come before action. It comes from action.

She also reminds us that our ultimate hope is not found in policy outcomes or technological breakthroughs, but in God — the God who has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and a sound mind, capable of faithful action even when outcomes are uncertain. Sometimes the most faithful next step is simply naming the issue out loud and asking, “Can we talk about this?”

## If You're a Pastor or Church Leader

***90% of Christian leaders in the U.S. believe climate change is real, yet only about half have ever shared that belief with their congregation.***

That silence sends a powerful signal. When leaders don't speak, congregations often assume the issue doesn't matter, or that it falls outside the boundaries of what faithful Christians should be concerned about. But the same study also found something hopeful: once congregations learned their leaders' views, there was a measurable shift in what people believed.

This reflects a deeper truth the Good Faith podcast returns to often: identity precedes belief. Most of us don't arrive at our views by independently sorting through all the data. Rather, we take cues from the people and communities we trust, like our pastors, small group leaders, friends, and peers.

For church leaders, simply naming the issue, without prescribing policy and without alarmism, can create space for discernment, learning, and faithful conversation. You don't need all the answers. You don't need a sermon series. You just need to acknowledge that this, too, is something Christians can care about. After all, as much as silence shapes identity, so, too does courage.





# FROM HELPLESSNESS TO AGENCY: HAVING THE HARD CONVERSATIONS

## **If You're Already Engaged In This Arena**

For Christians already engaged in conversations about climate change, Dr. Hayhoe offers a gentle recalibration: how we talk matters as much as that we talk.

She describes this as tending to the **head, heart, and hands**.

The head is the information – the facts, the data, and the evidence. The heart is what people already love and care about. And the hands are the actions – the things we can actually do together.

Too much focus on grim facts can leave people discouraged and paralyzed. Consider beginning with values you know you share and then connect them to your lived experience. Always point toward concrete, hopeful action and remember that the goal isn't to create a room full of anxious people but it's to cultivate a community that feels invited into participation.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- Have you ever assumed others didn't care about climate change because no one talked about it?
- What effect might silence from leaders have had in your church or community?
- If you're a leader, what would it look like to simply name this issue without prescribing solutions?
- When you talk about difficult topics, do you tend to focus more on information, emotion, or action?
- How might conversation itself be a faithful act of hope?

# A FINAL THOUGHT

If this conversation has surfaced questions, tensions, or even resistance, that's okay. Faithful engagement rarely begins with certainty. It begins with honesty and we're so glad you're here.

This conversation invites us to see climate change not as a partisan battleground, but as a place where faith, truth, and love of neighbor meet. It reminds us that science, at its best, is an act of careful truth-telling; that creation care is not a distraction from the Gospel, but one expression of it; and that the people most affected by environmental change are often those with the least power and the fewest choices.

We've also heard something deeply encouraging: you are not alone. Many people care more than they realize and the most powerful actions often begin smaller than we expect.

So here is the invitation: Have a conversation.

Not a debate. Not a lecture. But a conversation rooted in curiosity, humility, and care. Talk with a friend. A family member. A fellow church member. A pastor or small group. Share something that stood out to you from this episode. Ask a question. Name a concern. Begin with what you already care about.

After all, conversation itself can be an act of faith. It can break the silence that convinces us we're alone and where we make false assumptions about those around us. It can reshape what feels possible. And it can create space for discernment, hope, and shared action to take root.

You don't need to have all the answers. You don't need to convince anyone. You just need to be willing to speak – and to listen. And in a world shaped by fear and division, choosing to talk with one another may be one of the most faithful steps we can take.



# CLOSING PRAYER

God of truth and love,  
You made this world and called it good.  
You placed us within it, not as owners, but as stewards  
and as neighbors to one another.

Give us humility to listen well,  
especially when the questions feel complex  
and the answers feel uncertain.  
Free us from fear that silences us  
and from pride that hardens us.

Where there has been quiet, give us courage to speak.  
Where there has been division, give us grace to stay in  
relationship.  
Where there has been weariness, renew our hope — not in  
our own power, but in You.

Teach us to love our neighbors faithfully,  
to care for Your creation wisely,  
and to take the next right step together,  
trusting that You are at work even in small beginnings.  
We offer our conversations, our questions, and our actions  
to You.

May they reflect Your truth, Your compassion, and Your  
peace.

Amen.



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