

**A Q&A with Katharine Hayhoe and Andrew Farley on their new book,
A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based
Decisions**

***Questions asked by Jim DiPeso, vice president for policy and
communications at Republicans for Environmental Protection***

What prompted you and your husband, Andrew Farley, to write this book?

Every time we turn on the TV, it seems, there's people talking about climate change. But what we hear can be very confusing. One person may say it's warming, for example, while the next person tells us that it's cooling.

This book is the result of hundreds of conversations we have had over the last few years with people who are genuinely curious about global warming, but who are confused by all the rhetoric flying across the airwaves these days. We know everything we hear can't be true—but which part is fact, and which is fiction?

We wrote this book to provide simple, straightforward answers to many of the perplexing questions we have been asked, again and again: Isn't this just a natural cycle? If carbon dioxide is plant food, the more the better, right? All of these and many more questions are tackled in our book.

What are common questions and objections that you hear from fellow Christians about climate change?

There are good questions that are natural to ask when we hear that climate change is happening and that it's being caused by humans.

The first question is, how do we even know climate is changing? What kind of records do we have that would show us if this were happening? And how reliable are these records?

Then, if climate is indeed changing, how do we know it's not just a natural cycle, like it has been in the past? Or that the amount of energy we're getting from the sun is the cause?

Even if we're convinced of a human role in climate change, we still want to know, is it really going to be as bad as we hear? Would God really create a planet that could be disturbed by puny little humans? On top of that, wouldn't it cost too much money to fix the problem anyway?

These are all great questions that need solid answers, and we address each of these head-on in "A Climate for Change."

How much of the resistance to climate science is rooted in suspicion of liberals and concern that they will push for solutions that expand government?

That's a tough question. We can't say for sure who is resistant to believing in climate change because they fear it's simply a liberal conspiracy. That probably comes down to the individual and their own political thinking.

But historically, environmental concerns and business expansion have sometimes been at odds. On top of that, scientists and people of faith have sometimes found themselves on opposite sides of the fence. So, some people tend to lump all environmental concerns into the same bin of liberal propaganda. And with that, any concern about climate change can be categorized, labeled and dismissed.

In our book, we argue that climate change should not be dismissed out of hand because of preconceived prejudices against science or environmentalism. Climate change is about real thermometer readings and real temperatures over the last 200 years. Those records show a warming trend, period.

The thermometers are not Republican or Democrat, nor are they liberal or conservative. The goal of our book is to present the facts and figures of climate change in a non-political light, in order to let people of all backgrounds decide for themselves the truth of the issue.

We are not taking political sides nor are we advocating specific solutions. That is not our place. We are simply inviting people of all kinds to the table to discuss the following: Is climate change happening? How can we know for sure? And are we the cause?

Only when those questions are answered to the majority's satisfaction can we begin to move towards collaborative solutions.

Climate science can seem very abstract to ordinary lay people. How do you explain the science and the attendant risks of climate change in concrete terms that resonate with lay audiences, inside and outside of the faith community?

Climate change is a global issue; but what we care about is how it affects us right here, where we live. For this reason it's important for us to be aware of the ways climate change is altering the places we know and love.

A simple way to picture climate change is to realize that it is like picking up the places we live and, in terms of climate, moving them progressively further south. For most places in the US, conditions today are already similar to what it used to be like several hundred miles further south.

Where we live in Lubbock, TX, that means that we now see bird species that used to have to migrate much further south in winter. Fire ants are spreading into areas they've never been seen before. One of our colleagues has kept an annual record of when the peach trees in his backyard bloom each year. Over the last two decades, the typical flowering date has become progressively earlier and earlier in the year.

In the Northeast, winters have warmed by over 4°F over the last thirty years.

Optimal production for the region's famed blueberry and maple syrup crops is already shifting northward over the border into Canada. Winter sports are becoming increasingly more chancy, as mid-winter warm spells melt much of the snow and ice needed for traditional pastimes such as ice fishing, snowmobiling, and skiing.

In the Midwest, kudzu—otherwise known as the vine that ate the South—is already spreading northward through Illinois. Chicago now feels like southern Illinois did, just a few decades ago.

Over the coming century, if we continue on our current pathway, a typical Chicago summer will eventually feel like Mobile, AL does today; and the record-breaking heat wave that hit the city in 1995 will occur on average three times *each year*. Similar studies show Massachusetts's summers changing to become as hot and humid as those in South Carolina, and future conditions in Sacramento feeling like Death Valley does today.

These examples show us why we, personally, should care about what climate change is doing to the places we hope to preserve for our children.

Tell me a bit about navigating the perceived divide between science and faith. What has worked for you in building bridges between the worlds of science and faith?

We firmly believe there is no conflict at all between faith in an all-powerful God and understanding that humans are radically altering the face of our planet. In fact, they are completely compatible. We already know that bad things happen in our world. Poor choices have consequences. We live this out in our own lives, and now we see the same principle at work at the global scale.

At the same time, it's important to address many of the common concerns people may have. For example, why should we care about global warming if the Bible tells us the earth won't end that way? Does agreeing that climate change is happening mean we have to ascribe a birth date to planet Earth on the order of millions of years? We say, not at all!

Climate change is about thermometers and temperature readings. It's about what's been happening since the Industrial Revolution, just a few hundred years ago. It's based on scientific discoveries made in the 1700s and 1800s. These discoveries showed us how carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases trap heat; how they naturally keep the earth nearly 70°F warmer than it would be otherwise; and how unnatural increases in these gases will trap heat inside the atmosphere and warm the planet, just like putting on an extra blanket on a warm summer's night.

As we say in the book, God may have given us the ostrich, but it wasn't as a mythical example to imitate when confronted with unpleasant facts we'd rather ignore. Instead of burying our heads in the sand, we should take Gideon as our model, who examined all possible options and then when he'd had his questions answered, took action.

What is the relevance to climate change of Apostle Paul's message about using our freedom in Christ to make responsible choices?

God has given us the freedom to make our own choices. Paul tells us that "everything is permissible, but not everything is profitable." And in Andrew's book *The Naked Gospel*, he talks about the Christian's freedom from religious demands, and how we can be motivated from the heart, with "want-to's," not "have-to's."

This is an important message for us to take to heart. So many times it can be subtly communicated that every time we get in our car or turn on a light, we are doing something wrong. It doesn't take too long before that line of thinking will overwhelm us with guilt. And although some may disagree, we don't believe that guilt is an effective motivator for lasting change, nor do we believe that is what God intends for His children.

We need to realize that our old way of doing things, of depending on old, unrenewable sources of energy, is not the forbidden fruit. It is not that guilty pleasure, that favorite sweet that we just can't seem to give up because it tastes so good. Not at all. It's a dirty, inefficient way to get energy that pollutes our air and our water, and forces us to rely on foreign providers. It's something that makes absolutely no sense for us to continue in.

Yes, we are free to make choices—but the Apostle Paul tells us to use our freedom for good, not to abuse it by making poor decisions that we will pay the consequences for down the road. Here we don't mean consequences from God. We're simply talking about earthly consequences—we will receive the outcome of our choices, plain and simple.

What is the state of the discussion in the evangelical community about accepting the science of climate change and taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Over the last few years we have witnessed a major change in attitudes towards climate change, accompanied by an emerging desire to make our world a better place. In the book, we list people and organizations, from Rick Warren and Saddleback Church to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, who have made firm statements acknowledging the role humans are playing in altering our planet. We have also seen the growth of many faith-based aid organizations, from World Vision to Eden Reforestation, who are actively involved in mitigating the effects of climate change on the poor and disadvantaged around the world.

More and more, it seems that Christian communities are embracing the fact that we are indeed facing a serious issue at the planetary scale, and that loving our global neighbor means that we need to take prudent steps toward change.

How optimistic are you that Americans will find common ground on climate change and act responsibly to deal with it?

We feel that climate change represents both the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity of our generation. By making sensible, timely decisions to transition from an outdated reliance on already-limited fossil resources, to clean, homegrown green energy, everyone benefits.

It's our sincere hope that anyone with questions on climate change will take some time to look at the facts for themselves. In addition to answering many of the questions we've mentioned so far, our book provides many figures and references. We did this so that no one has to take our word for anything.

With the references we provide, you can go right to the source: whether it's NASA's temperature records or the Energy Information Administration's statistics on where and how much fossil resources remain around the world. Ultimately, we must all decide for ourselves whether global warming is a conspiracy that has deceived even NASA and the Pentagon, or whether it is a reality that we must confront.

What is the most important message that you would like Christians to take from your book?

The science of climate change has nothing to do with red politics, or blue politics, or any kind of politics. It's a simple matter of temperature readings and long-term trends that have been happening over the last few centuries.

By continuing to ignore objective scientific findings, we do ourselves and our global neighbors a tremendous disservice. It's time to open our eyes to what is happening to the world God has given us, and make sound, no-regrets choices to leave the world a better place for future generations.

What kind of early responses have you been getting to the book?

There are some who dismiss any book on climate change as liberal propaganda without even cracking open the cover. There are others who chastise us for under-selling the urgency of this issue, saying we should have presented it in more alarming terms. But when you're getting opposition from both sides of the fence, it likely means that your stance is right in the middle. And that's exactly where we want to be—providing fair and balanced information for anyone who has ever wondered whether climate change is real.

Katharine Hayhoe is a climate scientist, professor in the Dept. of Geosciences at Texas Tech University, and expert reviewer for the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. **Andrew Farley** is the lead pastor of Ecclesia and author of the Amazon bestseller "The Naked Gospel: The Truth You May Never Hear in Church." For a limited time you can

*read sample chapters of their new book, A Climate for Change, online at:
<http://www.climateforchangethebook.com>*