



Science and Faith in the Second City Study Series

Session 2: Why climate change matters

Climate change is a global problem, but one which affects us disproportionately. For example, those who live in the industrialised global north have contributed disproportionately to the problem, whereas the residents of the global south are far more likely to suffer the harmful consequences of climate change. Therefore, for Christians concerned with issues of inequality and social justice, climate change has to be high on our agenda. In this talk Dr Ruth Valerio takes the fact of climate change as a given. The scientific evidence for rising global temperatures as a result of human activities is now overwhelming. She shows that with this now near-universal acceptance of the facts how the language of climate change has shifted from global warming to climate change and more recently embraces the term ‘climate emergency’. Although not stated in the talk some authors place this emergency as soon as the mid 2030’s. Ruth Valerio reflects on the fact that during her career, over a period of about 30 years, extreme climate events originally made as predictions are now being reported in the news as regular events. The talk is in two parts. First, Dr Valerio explores how climate change affects the natural environment around us and how that impacts our communities; along with this analysis she provides a Christian theological underpinning for why climate change especially matters to Christians. In the second part of the talk Dr Valerio explores what must we do to combat the impacts of climate change.

Dr Ruth Valerio is Global Advocacy and Influencing Director for the Christian charity Tearfund. Before Tearfund, she was Churches and Theology Director for the Christian charity (A Rocha) that works for the protection and restoration of the natural world, and she spearheaded their Ecochurch project. She has a theology degree from Cambridge and a doctorate from Kings College London, holds honorary doctorates from the Universities of Winchester and Chichester and is currently Canon Theologian at Rochester Cathedral.

The main themes covered in this study are: the reality of climate change; inequalities resulting from climate change; nature interconnectedness; climate change theology; climate action; climate policy. These notes are intended for private or small group study. Please watch each video clip and then consider the associated study questions. There are 33 minutes of video and so in order to give enough time for discussion it is intended that the session lasts between 60-75 minutes. The video material for this study can be found on our website at <https://www.scienceandfaith.co.uk>

Study Questions

A Christian vision of the world

Watch the video

Ruth Valerio invites us to talk about our dream world. What we would like society to look like? A world where we can all flourish and where the inequalities of our present world are no longer there.

- In your group discuss aspects of a world which you would love to see.

Why climate change matters

1. Climate change matters for the sake of the world

Watch the next video

Using personal memories or your knowledge of local history think about the environmental changes that have taken place in your local environment over recent decades.

- Can you identify why these changes have taken place?

2. Climate change matters for the sake of people living in poverty.

Watch the next video

Reflect on the statistic that in the UK we consume in six days resources which last a person in Malawi a whole year.

- Are you persuaded that the issues of climate change intersect, and maybe even amplify, issues of race and gender?
- Would expect to see evidence of this even in your nearest city?

3. Climate change matters for our own sake, because we are part of an interconnected natural world

Watch the next video

Discuss some of the interesting phrases that Ruth uses in this section of the talk

- ‘we are earth creatures – not angelic and floaty’
- ‘if the wider world is damaged – then we too are damaged’
- ‘Nature deficit disorder’.

4. Climate change matters for God’s sake

Watch the next video

Try and recall the reasons given in the talk for why climate change should be an integral part of Christian thinking.

- Ruth writes on her website that she ‘long(s) to see the culture of the Church change so that caring for God’s earth becomes an integral part of church life, rather than an optional extra. Where would you say you are on the spectrum of integral to optional ?
- You may wish to discuss the observation that some Christians argue that ‘saving souls’ matters to God more than ‘saving the planet’.

What do we do (about climate change).

Watch the next video

Ruth has three points – Give, Act and Pray.

How much do you feel that you can be involved in

- taking action in our own lives to evaluate our lifestyle and patterns of consumption (she mentions the areas of food, travel, energy and waste.
- calling on governments and businesses to put in place policies that favour the poorer nations in order to bring about systemic change?

(you may wish to check the Tearfund website to see what campaigns and activities are current

[Environment and climate - Tearfund](#))

The talk ‘Why climate change matters’ was given in Birmingham in May 2022 as part of the Christian apologetics series ‘Science and faith in the Second City’. You can watch the talk in its entirety on our website. The project was funded by a Scientists in Congregations grant from ECLAS, in Durham, and organised by ChaplaincyPlus. This written material is free to copy.