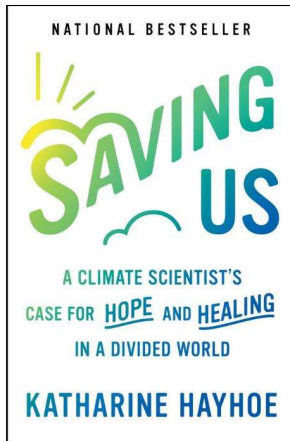


2/20/2024

# CLIMATE CHANGE: PUTTING HOPE INTO ACTION

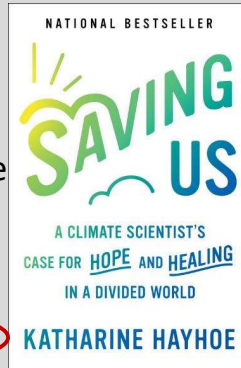


## SECTION 4 – We Can Fix It

## THIS WEEK (Session 4)

Sections from *Saving Us...*

- 1- The Problem and the Solution
- 2- Why Facts Matter – and Are Not Enough
- 3- The Threat Multiplier
- 4- We Can Fix It
- 5- You Can Make a Difference



Chapters:

- 12 – Why We Fear Solutions
- 13 – Carbon & the Common Good
- 14 – The Climate Potluck
- 15 – Everyone Needs Energy
- 16 – Cleaning Up Our Act
- 17 – Time to Speed Up

This section takes a bigger-picture view of solutions, emphasizing what countries, communities, and businesses can/need to do and how we can advocate for that. It may feel a little harder to accomplish, or even to wrap our minds around, than what we see in Section 5, but it does point to tangible steps.

## WHY WE FEAR SOLUTIONS (CH. 12)

### Solution Aversion:

“much of the resistance to climate change is really a rejection of what people perceive to be unpleasant or unpalatable solutions”

(p. 134-135)



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<https://bppblog.com/2018/03/27/solution-aversion/>

But are the solutions REALLY worse than the problem?

The concept that much of the resistance to climate change is really a rejection of what people perceive to be unpleasant or unpalatable solutions is known as solution aversion.... “...if we view climate solutions as harmful, we throw up scientific-sounding smoke screens to obscure our real objections. In reality, [those objections] have nothing to do with science, and everything to do with ideology and identity.” (p. 134-135) We may also find ourselves averse to solutions if we feel overwhelmed by the problem and think there’s nothing we can do to make a difference.

Are the solutions really worse than the problem? [Hayhoe and many others say that, while some of the solutions will require changes in our lives, the impacts of climate change will cause even more disruptions] Are we in a time when nothing we can do will make a difference? [That argument is often used by those who have a vested interest in the status quo.]

## FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO FEAR (Ch. 12)

“As Christians... our response to any challenge should be characterized by love. ...**Love is key to acting on climate: caring for the poor and the needy, those most affected by the impacts of a changing climate, as well as creation itself.** It’s not only our responsibility, it’s who Christians believe God made us to be.” (p. 142)



“As Christians... our response to any challenge should be characterized by love. Jesus says, ‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,’ and the apostle Paul amplifies this, instructing his readers that ‘the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.’ Love is key to acting on climate: caring for the poor and the needy, those most affected by the impacts of a changing climate, as well as creation itself. It’s not only our responsibility, it’s who Christians believe God made us to be.” (p. 142)

We’ll come back to this in the discussions. Consider: Does this resonate with your understanding of who God calls us to be? Why or why not? Does it reflect the way many people perceive that Christians act toward the environment? Why or why not? What do we do about it?

## WHAT ABOUT THE “COMMON GOOD”?

“But because we’re not paying directly for our personal exploitation of the environment, ...we each individually lack the incentive to reduce our impact on the global commons that is the Earth.” (p. 146)



Image source:  
<https://www.recipesforwellbeing.org/economy-for-the-common-good/>

“...as humans... we tend to value things more if we fear they will be taken away. Individually... we don’t perceive an incentive to act. ...of course there is a great deal of incentive to act; we just don’t see it. ... Few people realize that everyday pollution of air, water, or soil is responsible for one in six premature deaths worldwide.” [p. 146]

“But because we’re not paying directly for our personal exploitation of the environment, our pollution of the air, water, and soil, the accumulation of millions of tons of plastic waste in the oceans each year, and our heat-trapping gas emissions, we each individually lack the incentive to reduce our impact on the global commons that is the Earth. So is it any surprise that there is such a rancorous, ideological reaction to solutions that, by definition, require collective action? If we can’t see the risks clearly and up close, why would we act?” (p. 146)

One thing that has held back the development of alternate, clean energy sources is that policies (and funding) are skewed to fossil fuels. The pollution/adverse impacts are felt disproportionately by the poor.

## WHAT ABOUT OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

The fossil fuel industry pushed the idea of an individual carbon footprint.

**But...** we're not going to "solve the climate crisis" by changing individual choices alone. **We have to change the system which is dependent on fossil fuels.** (p. 149-150)

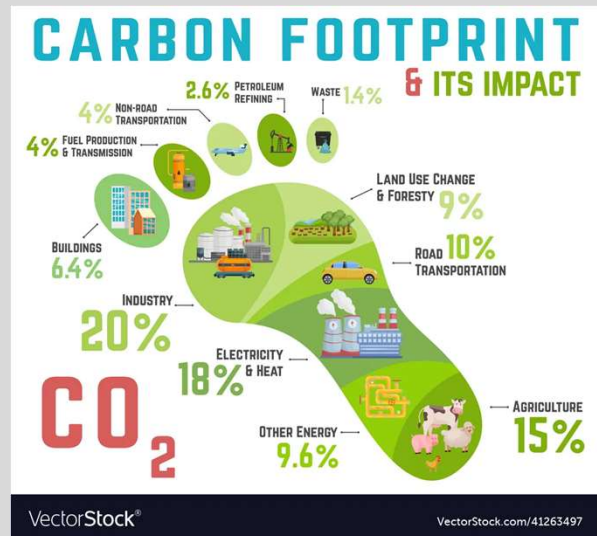


Image source: <https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/carbon-footprint-ecology-global-warming-concept-vector-41263497>

"...it didn't take that long... before one of these [fossil fuel] companies recognized the potential of the ecological footprint concept to shift the blame. In 2005, the individual carbon part of the footprint was extracted and popularized by a British Petroleum (BP) advertising campaign. It included a tool you could use to measure your (not their) carbon footprint, and what a success it was!" (p. 148)

However: "Individual choices control at most 40 percent of emissions in wealthy countries."

A climate scientist, speaking to the Presbyterians for Earth Care (2/13/2024), called individual carbon footprints "a sham" because it was the fossil fuel industry's attempt to push the onus onto individuals instead of them.

Hayhoe says we're not going to "solve the climate crisis" by changing individual choices alone. We have to change the system which is dependent on fossil fuels. (p. 149-150) This (busy) graph, brings that point home.

## EVERYONE NEEDS ENERGY (Ch. 15) ...but...

**Katharine Hayhoe:**  
“while electricity *is* a moral necessity—fossil fuels *aren’t*.” (p. 163)

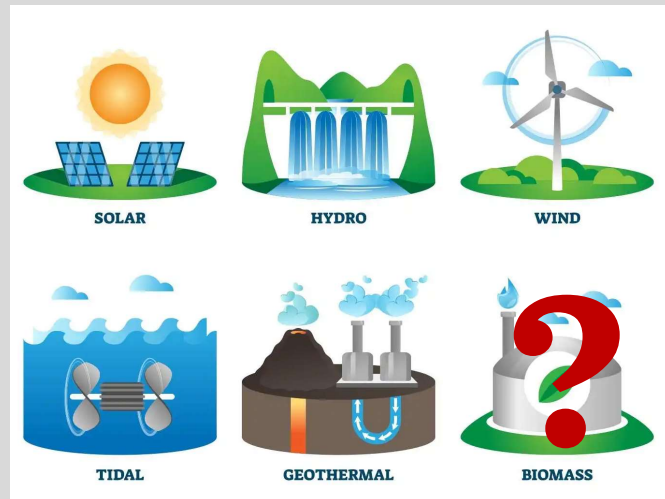


Image source: <https://www.inspirecleanenergy.com/blog/clean-energy-101/types-of-renewable-energy-sources>

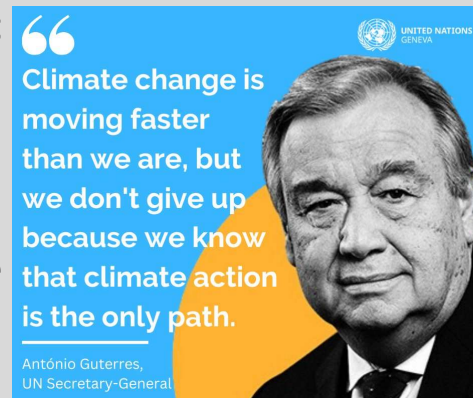
“...thanks to clean energy advances, we can now achieve the same goals without ruining the environment and our health. So while electricity is a moral necessity—fossil fuels aren’t. ...Today, many developing countries can leapfrog over obsolete technologies to newer, cleaner forms of energy, just like they’ve already done with cellphone technology. ...Yes, we need energy. ...climate change is an opportunity for economic development—an entire energy system has to be redesigned from the wastefulness of the previous century to a much smarter mode of doing things. It’s a great opportunity to improve global collaboration and knowledge sharing and to create a more just society.” (p. 163-165)

“The reason we’re seeing wind farms spread across America’s heartland and new solar installations being built across the Southwest... isn’t because of government subsidies. It’s because prices for renewable energy have dropped so low that subsidies are no longer needed to support them.” (p. 165)

About the image: Biomass is not considered ‘clean’ energy per se.

## TIME TO SPEED UP (Ch. 17)

**“While coal, oil, and gas have brought us significant benefits, they have done so at the expense of accumulating a substantial climate debt that is now coming due. At some point, it just makes sense to move on.” (p. 191)**



“Is it really possible to move to a world of net-zero electricity? It won’t be easy, but the answer is, emphatically, yes. Much of the technology is already in place to get there; what’s lacking now is the will and the investment.” (p. 171)

“At this point, it’s not a matter of whether. It’s a matter of when. And at our current pace, despite all the enormous progress that’s already been made, we aren’t moving fast enough — yet.” (p. 185)

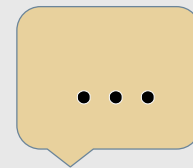
“The bottom line is this: Humans have been using fossil fuels for a very long time—all the way back to the coal we were burning in the Middle Ages. While coal, oil, and gas have brought us significant benefits, they have done so at the expense of accumulating a substantial climate debt that is now coming due. At some point, it just makes sense to move on.” (p. 190-191)

“This is the challenge that lies before us, and it’s not a small one. In fact, it may well be the biggest fight our civilization has ever faced. In this fight for our future, though, we’re not alone.” (p. 191)



What jumped out at you in Section 4?

## Discussion

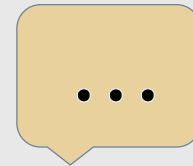


That's the wrap. Before jumping into discussion questions, what jumped out at you in Section 4?

Chapter 12 addresses many ways that we're more afraid of the solutions than we are of the problem.

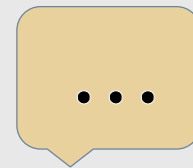
Where do you see solution aversion today? Is it more on the side of "the solutions are too big and difficult" or closer to "there's nothing I can do to make a difference"? How was Hayhoe's perspective helpful to you?

## Discussion



What is your reaction to Hayhoe’s perspective that as Christians, “Love is key to acting on climate: caring for the poor and the needy, those most affected by the impacts of a changing climate, as we as creation itself. It’s not only our responsibility, it’s who Christians believe God made us to be.”?

## Discussion



Hayhoe says we're not going to "solve the climate crisis" by changing individual choices alone. We have to change the system which is dependent on fossil fuels. How do you react to that? What are your reflections about your individual responsibility and corporate responsibility?

## Discussion



Hayhoe says that the fossil fuel industry and not individuals are responsible for the preponderance of climate change. She also says that we're not going to "solve the climate crisis" by changing individual choices alone. We have to change the system which is dependent on fossil fuels. How do you react to that? What are your reflections about your individual responsibility and corporate responsibility?

What excites you about all the current ways described in Section 4 for reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and other avenues of reducing the rate at which the earth's temperature is rising?

How does the material in these chapters give you hope?

## Discussion



Close with a focus on hope. Some ways to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and reduce the rate of climate change include:

- Developing clean energy sources, particularly in underdeveloped countries
- Investment in retrofitting our energy systems where fossil fuel is used
- Cap and trade
- Carbon taxation
- Reducing wastefulness, inefficiencies in energy production and use
- While carbon capture is mentioned, right now it is not efficient and too expensive. However, with time, it may be part of the solution

## Closing Reflection

“As we consider the basis for our hope, let us recall who God is. We must and can change our ways, live justly and sustainably on our planet, because of God, not because of ourselves. The hope we have lies in the radical transcendence of God.... God’s power of creative, redeeming, and sustaining love is closer to us than we are to ourselves. God is ... the source of power and love in which our world, our fragile, deteriorating world, exists. The world is not left to fend for itself, nor is God “in addition” to anything, everything. Rather, God is the life, love, truth, goodness, and beauty that empower the universe and shine out from it....

“Thus, ‘mysticism’ is simply this awareness of God’s presence in and through and with everything for its well-being.... Curiously, this faith, not in ourselves, but in God, can free us to live lives of radical change. Perhaps it is the only thing that can. We do not rely on such hope as a way to escape personal responsibility—‘Let God do it’—but rather this hope frees us from the pressure of outcomes so that we can add our best efforts to the task at hand.”

- Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*

### Reference:

Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 168, 169, 171.