

GIVE. PRAY. ADVOCATE.

Climate Conversation: Bangladesh

DISCUSSION GUIDE



CLIMATE
WITNESS
PROJECT



Overview

Thank you for your interest and willingness to facilitate a conversation about climate change in your community. *The Bangladesh Bible Study Series* is a three-week Bible study designed to help Christians engage faithfully with the issue of climate change in church groups, youth groups, community organizations, and more. It not only explores our biblical mandate to be stewards of creation but also convicts us of our Christian calling to be advocates for people who are poor and vulnerable. Each week's study is aimed and tailored to cover a specific theme, ranging from thinking about personal ways to reduce our carbon emissions, to living into our Christian calling as advocates. This is a study that promises to equip us for a faithful response toward climate change. Each week's study guide suggests concrete action steps to apply the lesson theme to daily living. The session lengths can be flexible, but we recommend one hour per session. All the videos for this study series can be found at worldrenew.net/creationcare.



VIDEO 1

Bangladesh: The Canary in the Coal Mine



VIDEO 2

The Food That Floats



VIDEO 3

Chickens Sink, Ducks Don't



VIDEO 4

The Changing Climate and Human Health



VIDEO 5

Advocacy: Called to Speak Out

WEEK 1 Bangladesh Bible Study

VIDEO 1

WEEK 1 STUDY OUTCOME

The purpose of this week's Bible study is to introduce participants to climate change realities in Bangladesh and to encourage reflections on climate change impacts in their own communities. The hope is that participants are able to situate themselves in the context of Bangladesh as a way of developing a sense of empathy and, ultimately, as a way of creating their own vision of energy stewardship.

VIDEOS 1 SUMMARY



The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). When World Renew began working in Bangladesh 40 years ago, malnutrition and hunger were rampant, but since then the numbers of people suffering malnutrition and hunger have been cut in half. Despite this great success, the progress made after decades of faithfulness is currently being threatened by a changing climate that has led to mass flooding, widespread crop failure, and the displacement of millions of people. Though it is tempting to believe this issue is out of reach and unrelated to our lives, God calls each of us both to love Bangladesh and to love God's creation—and therefore it is the duty of Christians to protect creation and the vulnerable people who live in it. An important way to do this is to advocate for public policy that will protect people and the rest of God's creation.

1. OPENING READ LEVITICUS 25:23-24; NUMBERS 35:34; DEUTERONOMY 10:14

- In the Leviticus passage God declares the land "Mine!" What does God mean by declaring "Mine" over all creation?
- The three passages center on God's sovereignty over the earth. Both the Leviticus and Numbers passages note a responsibility that God places on humankind in relation to the earth. What are some ways in which you believe you have lived up to this responsibility?

2. VIDEO AND DISCUSSION WATCH VIDEOS 1 — BANGLADESH: THE CANARY IN THE COAL MINE

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- At the beginning of the video, the narrator notes that “our world is changing” due to weather hazards attributed to climate change. What results of these changes have you seen on the news? Have you observed or experienced any of these impacts? Explain.
- Kuki Rokhum explains that due to the environmental disasters that accompany the changing climate, the people of Bangladesh have had to make significant lifestyle changes and living adjustments to anticipate and deal with environmental disasters. The actions that they have had to take have included raising homes and villages to higher levels to prevent flooding, and building flood shelters in order to escape from floods. These measures suggest a sense of high alert on the part of the people of Bangladesh.
- Reflect and share with the group how you think these changes affect the quality of life and general well-being in Bangladesh.
- Roy Berkenbosch says, “It is easy, I think, to be seduced by the idea that, well, these people are not close to me; I do not see them, I do not hear them; and so they do not matter—they are not my neighbors.” What are your reactions to this striking assertion?
- In your own view, what would caring for our Bangladeshi neighbors entail?
- At the end of the video, Kuki Rokhum encourages us to listen to the people most affected by climate change. What are some other steps we can take to address this issue and live into our biblical mandate to care for creation?

3. NEXT STEPS

- Now that you have begun to “listen and hear” the stories of some of the people most affected by climate change, we invite you to sign up to be a Climate Witness Partner. Signing up in this way furthers the goals of the **Climate Witness Project** (CWP), a campaign of the CRC Office of Social Justice and World Renew designed to walk with congregations as they learn about the realities of climate change, and as they seek to be better stewards of the resources they have been given. **Sign up to be a CWP Partner today** at crcna.org/cwp-subscribe.
- As a group, take advantage of the free guide *Ten Ways to Care for Creation* (bit.ly/10WaysCreation). Make a commitment together to follow through with these recommendations. Which of the recommendations are you engaged in already? Which ones can you accomplish in the coming month? In the coming year?

WEEK 2 Bangladesh Bible Study

VIDEO 2 & 3

WEEK 2 STUDY OUTCOME

At the end of this week's study, we hope that participants will be able to learn from the resilience of the people of Bangladesh as they deal with the harsh realities of climate change. In addition to this, it is our hope that participants will begin to understand the role we all play in contributing to climate change and will begin the faithful journey of making the effort to reduce their own carbon footprint in their environment.

VIDEOS 2 AND 3 SUMMARY



Increased flooding and unpredictable rains as a result of the changing climate have made survival difficult for the people of Bangladesh. Crops have been wiped out, and in most families the adults can barely feed themselves and their children.



Through it all, the people of Bangladesh have proved to be resilient. With the help of World Renew in collaboration with PARI Development Trust, the people of Bangladesh have begun to adopt innovative farming practices to endure what can be confidently described as an insecure life.

1. OPENING READ JOHN 14:27; ROMANS 14:19

- In John 14:27, Jesus leaves an assurance of peace with his disciples and believers. Discuss how the issue of climate change, especially in the context of Bangladesh, is a threat to the peace Jesus promises. How does this correspond with the Leviticus and Numbers passages on human responsibility to creation discussed last week?
(**Last week's passages:** Leviticus 25:23-24; Numbers 35:34.)
- "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:19, NIV). With the people of Bangladesh in mind, how can we work to reconcile and encourage "peace and mutual edification"—biblical promises that can seem to be absent in the nation of Bangladesh because of climate change?

2. VIDEO AND DISCUSSION WATCH VIDEOS 2 AND 3 — THE FOOD THAT FLOATS AND CHICKENS SINK, DUCKS DON'T

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Floating gardens, warm composts, raising of ducks, and other efforts are but a few of the innovative practices the people of Bangladesh have adopted to cope with the effects of climate change. What can we learn from the resilience of the people of Bangladesh?
- Considering the current reality of climate change in Bangladesh, do you believe our activities here in the United States/Canada contribute to the changes in their climate? Discuss.
- One of the Bangladeshi farmers notes that they “have to work in unity” as part of the way to address the issue of climate change. What are some ways we in North America can “work in unity” when it comes to the issue of climate change?
- Life in Bangladesh has required the people of that nation to focus on survival. Can you think of a time in your life when you were locked in “survival mode” for a long period of time? Describe that feeling and how it can help us empathize with the people of Bangladesh.
- Since we do not feel the impacts of climate change to the degree that the people of Bangladesh do, we need to remember that climate change is caused by the burning of fossil fuels, which releases carbon. North Americans can reduce the harm caused by climate change by reducing their dependence on the burning of fossil fuels. Write down ways in which your household could reduce the use of energy that comes from fossil fuels.

3. NEXT STEPS

- Take a ballpark guess on how much money you could save on energy per year if you put all of your energy-saving ideas into action. What would you do with your savings?
- Taking into account your ideas, make a list of simple steps you will take each day of this week in order to lower your carbon emission/footprint.
- Think of someone in your life who could help you with this task. (This could range from a friend who has energy-saving expertise to your energy provider and the potential grants they might offer.) Reach out to them, share your list with them, and begin your faithful walk of lowering your carbon footprint (and saving money)!

WEEK 3 Bangladesh Bible Study

VIDEO 4 & 5

WEEK 3 STUDY OUTCOME

This final study session is meant to equip and empower participants to live into their biblical mandate as advocates for people who are poor and vulnerable. Participants should conclude this study with an understanding that our distance from or unfamiliarity with other parts of the world should never be an excuse for us not to speak up or try to advocate and bring about change in situations of struggle and injustice. As Christians, we cannot be passive onlookers; it is our responsibility to respond faithfully to the issue of climate change by speaking up.



VIDEOS 4 AND 5 SUMMARY

Flash floods, hunger, serious illnesses, the migrant crisis—these are but a few of the disastrous effects climate change has unleashed on the people of Bangladesh. They implore their Christian brothers and sisters around the world to see this as not only a global moral issue but also as a global justice issue that summons us as Christians to live up to our Christian calling as advocates.

1. OPENING READ PROVERBS 31:8-9; MATTHEW 25:40; ROMANS 15:1

- What common theme do you draw from these three passages, and what words or phrases resonate most with you as you read these passages?
- In Proverbs 31, the Lord of heaven and earth calls us to “defend the rights of the poor and needy.” What rights are the people of Bangladesh fighting for when it comes to the issue of climate change? What does it mean for you personally to “defend the rights of the poor and needy”?
- How does your understanding of Matthew 25:40 translate into your day-to-day living as a Christian?

2. VIDEO AND DISCUSSION WATCH VIDEOS 4 AND 5 — THE CHANGING CLIMATE AND HUMAN HEALTH AND ADVOCACY: CALLED TO SPEAK OUT

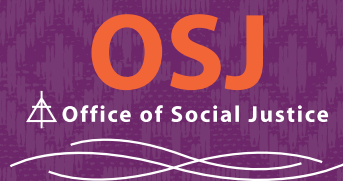
CONVERSATION STARTERS

- At the beginning of video 4, the narrator runs through a list of disastrous effects of climate change. He arrives at the question “How can we make a difference?” Given what seems to be an overwhelming crisis, how do you as a Christian think we can make an effective difference when it comes to the issue of climate change?
- How would you define the term “global justice issue”? Dr. Atiq Rahman asserts that climate change “is a global moral issue,” and, more importantly, “it is a global justice issue.” Do you agree with his assertion? Why or why not?
- At end of video 4, Kuki Rokhum challenges individuals in Western countries to “speak up, because when you speak up, it makes a difference in our nations.” Why do you think she pins and imposes a paramount moral obligation on the United States and Canada as being examples of such nations?
- In your own experience, what happened when you spoke up on behalf of someone or some people who were vulnerable? In what ways was it effective?
- Discomfort with and not knowing how to advocacy have been identified as reasons why Christians shy away from political advocacy. What are some other reasons that may contribute to this hesitation? How can we overcome these barriers to loving our neighbors?
- “I do not think [that as Christians] we have the choice of remaining quiet. We cannot be passive onlookers if we believe in this God of justice, a God who loves the poor,” states Kuki Rokhum. What are your reactions to this bold assertion? Would you consider yourself as a “passive onlooker” or having been one in the past? If so, how might you make changes as you move forward?

3. NEXT STEPS

- Based on what you have heard and experienced so far, take some time to reflect on and list three tangible ways in which you can personally live into and fulfill our God-given mandate and calling to be advocates, especially with regard to the particular issue of climate change. Share your responses with one or two people in the group.
- Take the step to sign up to receive periodic updates, newsletters, and action alerts on issues of climate change from Climate Change Advocacy groups. These groups are also great resources for helping you live into your individual calling of being a “Christian advocate.” Choose one example or as many as you wish from the list below:
 - The Climate Witness Project: justice.crcna.org/advocacy
 - Young Evangelicals for Climate Action: bit.ly/YECAStateLocal
 - CRC Centre for Public Dialogue: bit.ly/CPDFaithInAction
 - Citizens for Public Justice: cpj.ca/eco-justice/action
- Use this great free resource: *Biblical Advocacy 101* (find it at justice.crcna.org/action-center) —and follow the step-by-step instructions on how you can do advocacy effectively in your spheres of influence.

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justice.crcna.org



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