



# CREATION VOICE

A RESTORING EDEN PUBLICATION

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## An open letter in reference to the call of Dr. James Dobson and fellow family ministry leaders for the National Association of Evangelicals to either silence or dismiss NAE vice president Richard Cizik

On March 1, 2007, Focus on the Family's founder and director Dr. James Dobson and a group primarily composed of leaders in Christian family ministries (the "Dobson group") sent a letter to Dr. Roy Taylor, chairman of the board of the National Association of Evangelicals ("NAE"). In it they urged him to call for the resignation of Richard Cizik, the NAE's vice president of governmental relations, if Mr. Cizik did not cease from being an outspoken advocate of evangelical involvement in addressing the problems created by global climate change. The Dobson group stated that because global warming is "a subject of heated controversy throughout the world," and because it is uncertain "why it might be happening and what should be done about it . . . we believe it is unwise for an NAE officer to assert conclusively that those questions have been answered, or that the membership as a whole has taken a position on the matter."

We respectfully disagree with the Dobson group. Although Restoring Eden understands that the matter of climate change due to global warming is politically controversial, it does exist and its consequences now and in the future remain a reality that must be addressed by the church. Global climate change, along with multitudes of proven negative human impacts on God's good creation, has practical implications for followers of Christ in their thinking, living, and working. Many evangelicals have for more than twenty years pled with James Dobson, Tony Perkins, Gary Bauer, D. James Kennedy, Jerry Falwell and the leaders of several other conservative evangelical ministries to stop ridiculing and criticizing how creation-care advocates believe we ought to live in obedience to God, and to instead add to their own ministries the biblical mandate to love and care for our Lord's creation. We call on the Dobson group to come to a common table to discuss with evangelical leaders in the creation-care community how we can support each other in our work and Christian living by adding creation care to the foundational framework of all our ministries.

It is certainly true that Richard Cizik's personal beliefs regarding climate change—as well as those of many other prominent evangelicals concerned with the health of God's creation—have received a great deal of coverage in the national media for over two years. The Dobson group has characterized this coverage as coming from the purported "liberal media" as the result of a

IN WISDOM YOU MADE  
THEM ALL: THE EARTH IS  
FULL OF YOUR CREATURES

PSALMS 104:24

“relentless campaign orchestrated by Cizik.” This characterization, however, reflects primarily the Dobson group’s bias, not that of the media. It would be more accurate to say that because Mr. Cizik is a conservative evangelical and former pastor, his outspoken advocacy in the evangelical community for an attitude and behavior change in the church regarding our stewardship of God’s good creation—including the call for us to change our human behavior in order to combat the effects of global warming—he has raised the attention of all media that report on public policy issues. Mr. Cizik’s comments are newsworthy because the Dobson group and other large parachurch ministries have for years reinforced a notorious perception in America that the evangelical community does not care about the world’s environmental crises and the suffering and loss created by them. To have a representative of the NAE speak in favor of evangelical involvement in addressing the problems created by global warming and other environmental degradations is indeed news.

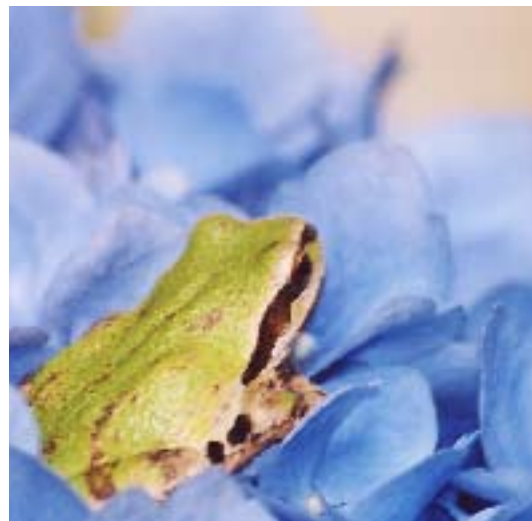


photo by Alexis Ilyin

THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S  
AND EVERYTHING IN IT.  
PSALM 24:1

Mr. Cizik’s statements and beliefs have received media attention because they are strongly opposed to the statements and beliefs about environmental matters that have been a part of the nay-saying media blitz of Focus of the Family and similar organizations for years. Their organizations have been perceived by many in the national media as the dominant voices for America’s evangelicals for some two decades. It is not in any sense surprising that the emergence of a new and strikingly different evangelical voice should attract media attention.

Restoring Eden is disappointed that the Dobson group seems blind to its own culpability in forming the impression in America that evangelicals as a whole do not care about the state of the environment, the very world that came from the hand of the Creator whom we say we honor and worship. Indeed, the letter from the Dobson group reflects a shocking haughtiness concerning what issues evangelicals should be concerned about. For example, the letter states that Mr. Cizik and others are using the global warming controversy to shift the emphasis away from “the great moral issues of our time, notably the sanctity of human life, the integrity of marriage and the teaching of sexual abstinence and morality to our children . . . We implore the NAE board to ensure that Mr. Cizik faithfully represents the policies and commitments of the organization, including its defense of traditional values.”

We at Restoring Eden are astonished that the Dobson group would criticize Mr. Cizik’s wider beliefs about what are “great moral issues” and “traditional values,” and yet be blind to the extreme narrowness of their own list of legitimate concerns for evangelical Christians. We know of no Scriptural support for narrowing the list of Christian moral issues to abortion, the integrity of marriage, and the teaching of sexual morality to our children. Further, for the Dobson letter signatories to fail to recognize that care of creation is a vital aspect of valuing and saving human life is a strong indication that these leaders are ignorant of the meaning and scope of humankind’s stewardship role regarding the Lord’s creation—and of evangelical Christians’ egregious failure to address creation’s degradation. It is

as though they have so insulated themselves from the other biblically mandated moral issues that they have made spiritual blinders for themselves. It can only be for this reason that they seem shocked and scandalized to hear fellow evangelicals advocate caring for creation as both a biblical “moral issue” and a Christian “traditional value.”

Dr. Dobson and many of these other self-professed leaders have often spoken of being instructed and motivated in their ministries by the beliefs and conclusions of Francis Schaeffer. Since Schaeffer was himself an outspoken advocate of caring for creation as a biblical moral value and a traditional Christian value, it strikes us as odd—and deeply saddens us—that the Dobson group consistently misses making the care of creation an aspect of their own foundational frameworks. It seems they were not paying attention to Schaeffer when he said these things in his 1970 book *Pollution and the Death of Man*:

God’s calling to the Christian now, and to the Christian community, in the area of nature—just as in the area of personal Christian living in true spirituality—is that we should exhibit a substantial healing here and now between man and nature and nature and itself, as far as Christians can bring it to pass . . . . So man has dominion over nature, but he uses it wrongly. The Christian is called upon to exhibit this dominion, but exhibit it rightly: treating the thing as having value in itself, exercising dominion without being destructive. The Church should always have taught and done this, but she has generally failed to do so. And we need to confess our failure.

Another architect of modern evangelicalism was Carl F. H. Henry. Dr. Dobson and many of his fellow parachurch ministry leaders honor Henry as a great teacher and mentor to them in their calling to ministry. It seems, though, that they missed Henry’s words as well:

God has much more in mind and at stake in nature than a backdrop for man’s comfort and convenience, or even a stage for the drama of human salvation. His purpose includes redemption of the cosmos that man has implicated in the Fall. Today the ecological problem is often stated in a way that accommodates the divorce and alienation of history and nature by exaggerating the importance of man and downgrading the importance of nature; the ecological problem thus becomes one of man’s survival . . . . It is unfair to blame Christianity for the ecological crisis; what’s more, Christianity is best able to arrest it. The Bible has timeless relevance for ecological problems; neither heirs of nor strangers to the Judeo-Christian outlook can afford to overlook its message. [Vol. II, “God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part One”]

Even James Dobson’s fellow conservative, Charles Colson spoke to the issue in his book *The Body*:

We should be contending for truth in every area of life. Not for power or because we are taken with some trendy cause, but humbly to bring glory to God. For this reason, Christians should be the most ardent ecologists. Not because we would rather save spotted owls than cut down trees whose bark provides lifesaving medicine, but because we are mandated to keep the Garden, to ensure that the beauty and grandeur God has reflected in nature is not despoiled. We should care for animals. Not because whales are our brothers, but because animals are part of God’s kingdom over which we are to exercise dominion. Francis of Assisi should be our role model, not Ted Turner or Ingrid Newkirk.

**SO GOD SAID TO NOAH,  
“THIS IS THE SIGN OF  
THE COVENANT I HAVE  
ESTABLISHED BETWEEN  
ME AND ALL LIFE ON  
EARTH.”  
GENESIS 9:17**

Undeniably, Creation is the source of all material life, which will one day be redeemed and restored along with God's people. If the Dobson group had paid better attention to these and many other evangelical voices of the past and present, they would recognize what both Schaeffer and Henry saw—and Colson in his more introspective moments—sees: because we worship and serve the Creator, we have a responsibility to wisely use, earnestly protect, and faithfully serve His creation.

This is clearly and absolutely an evangelical call, and Richard Cizik has just as legitimate a responsibility to issue that call from the platform of the NAE in the same manner as the Dobson group has issued calls from their own platforms regarding the sanctity of life, marriage protection, and the teaching of biblical sexual morality to our children. Their strident and narrow messages have caricatured the beliefs of evangelicals, and have for years drowned out the voices of many, if not most, others who identify with the NAE.

We applaud the decision of the NAE board to reaffirm their commitment to Cizik. Evangelicals are called to give attention to all of God's mandates as they are verbally communicated in His special revelation and non-verbally articulated in His general revelation, the natural creation, which declares God's glory and His love.

In closing, we again earnestly plead with our dear brother in Christ, James Dobson, and his fellow ministry leaders to come to a common table to discuss with the NAE and with evangelical leaders in the creation care community how we can support each other in our work by reaffirming that creation care as foundational to all our ministries and by promoting it as a legitimate biblical mandate. We owe that to our great Creator and Savior.

Sincerely,

The board and staff of Restoring Eden.

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THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS  
IN ALL HIS WAYS AND IS  
LOVING TOWARDS  
ALL HE HAS MADE.  
LET EVERY CREATURE  
PRAISE HIS HOLY NAME  
PSALMS 145: 17, 21