

Interviewer: The subtitle of your talk at the Boise Center is from Deuteronomy 20:19: “Are trees in the field human beings, that they should come under siege from you?” At first you actually wanted this to be the title. What about this verse speaks to you about war and the environ-

Laurie Johnston: I’ve been interested in the ethics of war for a long time and just war theory as an approach to thinking about how to limit war and how to make war more ethical. There’s a strong connection between climate change, environmental

to address environmental problems, most of the conversation is about more ordinary activities of life. How can we – in our families, in our schools and in our businesses – reduce our carbon

acknowledgment that there’s something wrong about the killing of human beings, and the verse then invites us to apply that to trees – to the natural environment. Both of those things I think are important.

The other piece I like about it is that it shows that this consideration of what is the environmental impact of war is an ancient question. It’s not so much that this is a new issue, as that the scale is different now, like with so many other issues connected to war. The basic human problem of disrespect for the environment is ancient and still needs addressing. These issues are interconnected. Our attitudes towards killing human beings and our attitudes towards destroying the natural environment bear some relation to each other.

Interviewer: How did you become interested in war and its effects on the environment?

devastation and warfare. More and more wars are being driven by environmental destruction, by climate change and by resource scarcity. The interconnections between the damage that’s done to the environment and the damage that’s done by war have been increasingly coming to everyone’s attention.

At the same time, when we talk about how to limit climate change and how

thing exceptional that doesn't need to be considered when we think about climate change. Now it's becoming clear that climate change aggravates war, and war is contributing to climate issues. They're deeply interconnected, and we have to think about the intersection.

Question: How has modern warfare increased the potential for far-reaching environmental devastation?

