

Day 5: Abandon Disposables!

I guess this is the "bad pun" day. Disposables, of course, are designed to be abandoned, and that indeed is the problem. We are a throw-away society and that is a measure of our poor stewardship of our wealth.

Replace paper products with durables.

No paper towel can clean as well as a cloth towel. In my kitchen I have a big wicker basket of cloth towels and napkins. I also have a second basket for the towels and napkins for when they have been used. When I am cooking, I make sure I have several cloth towels handy. I often tuck one into my belt so I can wipe or dry my hands on it as necessary. If I am simply mopping up a bit of water, I hang the towel over the side of the wicker basket so it can dry and be used again without washing first. If the cloth rag is wet, and needs a washing before it can be used again, I also hang it on the side of the basket to dry, so I don't end up with a smelly basket of moldy cloths. Flea markets and garage sales are great places to find towels and cloth napkins. Here's a link to a site with info about making your own cloth napkins:

[Make your own cloth napkins!](#)

Remember: six MILLION trees are killed every year to make tissues for people to blow their noses with. Carry a cloth handkerchief instead! If you have the sniffles, carry two or three handkerchiefs.

Diapers

So many parents have told me that cloth diapers are superior to disposable diapers that even though I myself have no children, I do not hesitate to recommend them. First of all, manufacturing disposable diapers is not an environmentally friendly process, and second of all, neither is the popular method of disposal (wrapping in black plastic and burying them in the ground). And third, children wearing cloth diapers usually are toilet trained several months in advance of the disposable wearing kids. Every parent I've ever known has welcomed the day a child is toilet trained with more enthusiasm than the Parisians welcoming the Allied troops during World War II. Here are some links where you can find everything that you need to know about cloth diapers.

<http://www.thediaperhyena.com/>

<http://www.diaperjungle.com/sewing-cloth-diapers.html>

<http://www.fuzbaby.com/makeyourown.htm>

<http://www.diapersewing.com/>

http://www.gentleparenting.com/diaper_wipes_faq.html

Plates, Cups, Utensils

If your church has a dinner and habitually uses paper plates and cups, bring your own plate, cup, utensils, and then take them home afterwards and wash them. Instead of using foam cups for coffee at work, bring your own coffee cup from home. Note that a quiet example is often more productive than a stern lecture. Us United Statesians throw away 25 BILLION polystyrene cups every year!

Re-use Gift Wrappings

Growing up in southwest Oklahoma in the 1950s and 1960s, our family routinely recycled bows, ribbons, and a lot of wrapping paper from year to year. When asked about that, my mother would say, "We only used those bows once, it would be foolish to throw them away." Actually, some of those bows had been used in our family for several years. But if you pack them away carefully, they are just fine the following year.

Re-fill Water Bottles.

If you buy water in plastic bottles, refill the bottles. Not only do you recycle a useful product, you save money. You can refill the bottles with filtered water. A second alternative is to NOT buy water in plastic disposable bottles and instead carry water in permanent containers. These can be filled with tap water or with filtered water. Note that even the most expensive bottled waters are usually just tap water that has been filtered.

Ditch the Store-bought Sponges.

Store-bought sponges quickly become breeding grounds for bacteria. If you use a used sponge to (e.g.) Clean a counter-top, generally you are just smearing around even more bacteria to new breeding grounds. Using a dish rag or permanent scrub brush is a much healthier option - healthy for you and your family, and healthy for the environment.

Avoid Plastic Bags.

Buy several cloth totes and take them with you when you go shopping.

Glass Bottles

Even glass is considered disposable these days. Many people actually throw away glass jars after consuming the food that was inside. I did that one time. I was about 12 years old. I threw a pickle jar into the trash at my grandparent's house. My grandfather pulled it out of the trash, looked at me and said, "Bobby Max, you already paid for that glass jar, why would you want to throw it away?" Indeed.

Sure, glass can be recycled, and if you won't use the jar again, then it should go to the recycling bin. But a better idea is to re-use the glass jar. A lot of my drinking glasses were once food jars. I use glass jars to store dehydrated foods, smaller amounts of items I buy in bulk (like certified organic whole wheat flour), and cold water in the refrigerator.

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I am sure there are many other ideas out there about replacements for disposable items in our lives.

For more information check out:

www.bettertimesinfo.org

www.energyconservationinfo.org

www.bobwaldrop.net