

GO 
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GREEN

A Simple Guide to Saving Time, Money,
and GOD'S Green Earth

NANCY SLEETH



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Go Green, Save Green: A Simple Guide to Saving Time, Money, and God's Green Earth

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To my dear and loving husband, Matthew

*“If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov’d by wife, then thee.”*

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Foreword

“HOW CAN I GET MY ELECTRICITY bill down to the \$20 range?”

“Can I feed my family, support local agriculture, and spend less money?”

“What does the Bible say about simple living, frugality, and generosity?”

“What should I do if my spouse won’t stop buying stuff we don’t need?”

These are just a few of the practical questions that Nancy and I have been asked while speaking at churches and schools throughout the country. A growing number of people are being inspired by their faith to cut back on spending and live more spirit-filled, less materialistic lives, yet they don’t know where to start.

Over and over we are told, “Okay, you’ve convinced us that we need to take better care of what God has given us, but we need to know how.”

Go Green, Save Green provides the down-to-earth, practical

advice that is so urgently needed. The first faith-based guide for green living, this book will help you save time and money while leaving a healthier environment for your children and future generations. Filled with ideas for greening up your home, workplace, school, and church, this book will help you put your faith into action—immediately. You'll learn how to accumulate less stuff while building more community; how to spend your holiday, travel, and entertainment times in ways that honor God; and how to create a rhythm of Sabbath rest in the midst of your fast-paced lives. In the pages that follow, you'll find strategies to tangibly show your love for God by caring for his creation—today, this week, this month, and this year.

Go Green, Save Green, however, is not about making do with less; it's about doing *more* with less. It's about spending more time with family, friends, and God—and less time taking care of things. It's about acknowledging that it all belongs to God, and learning to be better stewards of his blessings.

We live in uncertain times. Real estate and stock markets fluctuate widely. Jobs and grocery prices are no longer stable. Yet it is possible to have a security that cannot be shaken, no matter how volatile our economy. That security is found not in the global economy, but in God's economy.

Earth stewardship is based on sound theology. From Genesis to Revelation, we are told that God wants us to love what he loves. He sent his Son to die for the whole world; God loves all of creation. We should love and show respect for everything created by God's hand.

Those who follow Jesus are told to be humble and meek. We are taught not to store up our treasures on earth, but in heaven. We are instructed to help the orphans and the widows. Living like Christ is not only good for our souls; it is good for the planet. It is a strategy that will enable your family to thrive, especially in difficult times.

Go Green, Save Green is based on real life—our family's life. The

stories and advice Nancy shares are not abstract; they are rooted in years of frugal living, simplicity, and generosity. In practical terms, these lifestyle choices have made it possible for us to carry out our ministry while sharing God's love.

Nancy and I do not believe in living big, except in one area: hospitality. When Abraham welcomes the strangers at his tent, when Rebecca waters the camels at the well, when Mary anoints Jesus with oil, they are demonstrating extravagant hospitality. What distinguishes Christian frugality from other money-saving strategies is that instead of focusing on self, it extends to sharing with others. When we save money, it gives us more to share with our neighbors. It allows us to be generous and to help those who have much greater physical needs than we do. It frees us up to answer God's call.

Christian frugality means that when someone knocks, you are free to open the door and give your very best.

One of the most important questions we have ever been asked occurred at a public forum. We were speaking at a Christian college in the Bible Belt. The girl who raised her hand was one of the youngest in the audience, only twelve or thirteen years old. Her query was the elephant in the room, the question everyone wanted—but was afraid—to ask: “Is it too late?”

The answer is no, it is not too late, but we do need to make changes—quickly. A lot of small actions by a lot of people make a big difference. Science, government, and business will provide some of the answers, but the church offers something that these institutions cannot: hope.

With God, together we can move mountains. But we all need to pick up a spade and start shoveling. This book will show you how.

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD,
YOUR BROTHER IN CHRIST,

J. Matthew Sleeth, MD

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Introduction

You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

JAMES 2:22

IT ALL BEGAN WITH TWO SIMPLE QUESTIONS.

A few years back, my husband was a well-respected physician at the top of his career—director of emergency services and chief of medical staff. He loved taking care of patients, and I loved caring for our family. We lived with our children, Clark and Emma, in a picture-perfect town in a three-story New England house, complete with library, guest suite, and four bathrooms. Our kids took sailing lessons in the summer and skied in the winter. We ate lobster fresh from the wharf. We were enjoying the good life and living out the American dream.

But something was missing. We had all the nice *things* that were supposed to make us happy, yet at the core we still felt hollow.

Then, during the course of one week, Matthew admitted three different women to the hospital—all in their thirties, all with breast cancer, all destined to die. One woman seized uncontrollably, and Matthew could not stabilize her. He had to go out to the waiting

room and tell her husband, who had a toddler on one hip and a little girl holding his hand, that his wife was gone. Matthew did what any compassionate doctor would do: he hugged the young dad, and they cried together.

That night, Matthew came home visibly upset. He told me about the young women with breast cancer, and then asked, “What are the odds?” We looked in his textbook from medical school, which said that one in nineteen women had a lifetime chance of getting breast cancer. The updated version of that same textbook said one in nine women. The incidence now, just a few years later, is nearly one in six.

Matthew said that it was time to stop “running for the cure” and start looking for the cause.

Around this time, we went on a family vacation to a barrier island off the coast of Florida. The island is idyllic—no cars, no roads, no stores—just sun and surf and beautiful sunsets. After playing in the ocean all day and running around trying to catch geckos, the kids went to bed early, exhausted. Adult time, at last! Matthew and I relaxed on the upstairs deck, watching the palm trees waving in a cool breeze and enjoying the silence of the stars.

We stayed like that, just sitting in the tropical moonlight, for a long time. I couldn't help but compare the peacefulness of the night air with the busyness of our lives back home. So rarely did we have time to stop and think, to discuss the big questions of life. Our conversation rambled from art and music, to books we were reading, to the state of the world.

And then I asked two questions that would change our lives forever.

“What do you think is the biggest problem facing the world today?”

I could just about see the wheels whirling in Matthew's head: *Hunger? Poverty? War? AIDS?* There was no shortage of potential answers.

After a few minutes, Matthew offered a reply that I was not expecting: “The world is dying.”

He explained his reasoning. “There are no chestnuts left on Chestnut Lane, no elms on Elm Street, no caribou in Caribou, Maine. The oceans are just about fished out, and the songbirds are disappearing. Rainforests the size of North Carolina are being cut down each year—and more than twenty thousand species go extinct annually.”

Matthew took a long sip from his glass, and then sighed. “For the first time in history, the amount of living matter on earth is actually decreasing—there’s no good ending to this story. If we don’t have a healthy planet to sustain humanity, none of the other problems will matter.”

It didn’t take much to convince me that Matthew was right—our planet is indeed dying. I could see the changes in my own lifetime. As a child, I remember frequently stopping to help turtles cross the road—and seeing frogs and fireflies, honeybees and butterflies everywhere. Seemingly endless flocks of birds would fly overhead every spring and fall. But in just a few decades, nearly all of this wildlife had disappeared. The meadow behind my childhood house had been replaced with ChemLawn green grass and cookie-cutter McMansions. When I approached the nearest major city, I saw a dome of smog covering its inhabitants. Without clean air, clean water, and healthy soil our children would face a turbulent future, with people struggling for increasingly scarce resources.

The more we talked about the demise of the planet, the more depressing it all felt. The problems seemed so overwhelming. But Matthew is a big-picture thinker, a problem solver, a man of action.

That’s when I asked the second, more difficult, question:

“If the planet is dying, what are we going to do about it?”

My husband did not have a ready answer. But when we got back from vacation, he did not stop thinking about the challenge. A couple of months later, he finally did get back to me—with an answer I wasn’t prepared to hear:

“I’ll quit my job,” he said, “and put all my energy toward saving the planet.”

“Are you sure we need to do *that* much?” I replied.

I had always thought of myself as a good environmentalist. I understood why recycling was important. And picking up litter. I was even okay being the only mom on our block without a family van, making do with a more fuel-efficient sedan. But giving up a career that my husband clearly loved, as well as the prestige, steady income, and security that came along with it, to “save the planet”?

The thought terrified me. My stomach turned inside out just thinking about what we might lose—our beautiful home, our harborside neighborhood, our vacations, not to mention health benefits and a retirement plan. It wasn’t like Matthew had a meaningless job—he was employed by a nonprofit hospital, healing the sick and taking care of the poor. And he was extremely good at his work: Matthew had a gift for diagnosis and a talent for putting his patients at ease in even the most trying circumstances.

The selfish part of me began to whine: What about the three years of undergraduate school, four years of medical school, and three years of residency we had gone through together? Wouldn’t he be wasting all that training? And then there were practical concerns: The kids were approaching their teen years. College was just around the corner. How would we possibly save enough money to pay for their education if our income dropped suddenly to zero? How, for that matter, would we put food on the table?

Each of my arguments sounded logical on its own. In the material world, my husband’s sudden career change made no sense. Walking in faith may sound good in theory—when it happens to other people and everything turns out okay in the end—but I was terrified to take even the first step. What followed was a tense time, full of anxiety, fear of change, and conflicting desires.

People ask us if we had any arguments. Of course we did! I’d be lying if I said that there were no raised voices or sleepless nights.

But gradually I came, if not to peace, at least to acceptance of the new direction our life would take.

The transition—as much emotional and spiritual as physical—took a couple of years. One of the very first things we did was to take an accounting—a measure of our ecological footprint. We had always thought of ourselves as environmentally aware—using cloth diapers, recycling, never driving a car with more than a four-cylinder engine. But when we actually calculated our total use of resources, we found ourselves exactly average for Americans: not bad for a physician's family—since in general the more income people have, the more resources they consume. Yet, we were clearly using more than our fair share on a global scale: *six times* more energy than our neighbors around the world!

Providentially, as we embarked on our environmental journey, we also began a faith journey. It seemed—at least to us—that the two were inseparable. Coming from two different faith backgrounds, Matthew and I began reading a range of sacred texts—including Hindu, Buddhist, and Hebrew. We listened to the Ramayana on tape together, read parts of the Book of Mormon, and even worked through the beginning of the Koran—but still we did not seem to find any satisfactory answers.

One slow night in the hospital, Matthew picked up an orange Gideon's Bible in the waiting room. He read through one of the Gospels. A light came on. Here were the answers we had been seeking.

Matthew brought the Bible home. One by one, each of us became believers—first Matthew, then Clark, then me, and finally Emma. And that changed everything. Suddenly, the whole family was working off the same page. We had a clear purpose: to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. One way that we could show our love for the Creator, and for our global neighbors, was to start taking better care of the planet.

To learn what the Bible had to say about earth stewardship,

Matthew read through the entire Old and New Testaments, underlining in orange pencil everything that had to do with nature, creation, and how we are to instructed to care for the earth. We found that Matthew 7:3-5 seemed to speak directly to our family: “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”

We took Jesus’ advice and began cleaning up our own act before worrying about cleaning up the rest of the world. Over the next couple of years, we downsized our lifestyle, giving away half of our possessions and moving to a house the size of our old garage. Contrary to my earlier fears, we found that the more we “gave up” in material things, the more we gained in family unity, purpose, and joy. Eventually, through many small changes, we reduced our electricity usage and trash production by nine-tenths and our fossil fuel usage by two-thirds.

After we had our own house in order, we felt called to share our journey. Matthew wrote a book called *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*. Using stories from our family’s life and the ER, he relayed why we made these changes and inspired others to do the same.

People liked the book—a lot. It’s an easy book to read, but hard to ignore. Letters poured in from readers who felt called to change but didn’t know where to start. Invitations to speak, preach, and lead workshops came from Washington, D.C. to Washington State, from every denomination and faith, from churches with ten members to tens of thousands. People were inspired to change; now they wanted to know *how*.

In *Go Green, Save Green*, I will share what worked, what didn’t, and what we learned in the process. Some steps came easily; others required a new way of thinking or a change of habits. I don’t offer a

one-size-fits-all plan; each family must decide which changes work best for them, and then keep doing a little bit better every year.

What if someone in your household is not on board? Our daughter Emma, reluctant at first, ended up writing a book for teens called *It's Easy Being Green* and becoming a leader of the next generation's Christian environmental movement.

Regardless of where you and your family members are on the journey, this book will provide practical advice on everything from household cleaners, gardening, and fast food—to tips for Christmas shopping, giving away money, and finding quiet time with God.

This is not, however, just a book about practical ways to save time, energy, and money. This is a personal journey of hope. If someone like me can do it, I know you can too!

Years ago, back on that island in Florida, two questions—prompted by God—launched our family on this journey.

Today, when making any choice, purchase, or decision, we ask ourselves two new questions: Does this bring me closer to God? And, does this help me love my neighbor?

The answers always lead us down the right path.



Dear heavenly Father, Creator, and Sustainer, please open my heart to the beauty of your creation. Teach me to value your sustaining gifts and to steward them wisely. I beseech you, gracious and loving God of the universe, to create a thirst in my heart for change: Give me a thankful heart, and free me from my wasteful habits. Teach me to rely on your strength alone, for I know that real and lasting transformation can only come through you.

The changes we have made will not earn our way into heaven, but they do two important things for our souls: They connect us with the family of humanity around the globe, and, more important, they bring us closer to God. If he asks us to give up everything we have and follow him, I now know with certainty that each member of my family would gladly do so. This lack of attachment to things, rather than the size of our home, brings us priceless freedom and allows us to hear his call.

—Serve God, Save the Planet

They say home is where the heart is—and home is also the best place to start in making our lives greener. In offering lots of suggestions for making your home more earth-friendly, my point isn't to make you feel guilty about all the things you should be doing differently. My point is to help you see that there are so many ways—some very simple, some a little tougher—to have a positive impact on the environment. We all have the ability to change the world, one choice at a time.

—It's Easy Being Green

Home

Small Changes, Big Results

*Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool:
what house will ye build me?*

ACTS 7:49, KJV

THE DAY I TURNED FORTY, my older sister called. “Forty is okay,” she reassured me. “It’s a couple years from now that the body really starts to slide downhill.”

And she was right. Within a couple of years, I couldn’t read the road signs quite as easily, especially at night. The arches of my feet started to ache if I didn’t wear shoes with good support. And my clothes seemed to shrink all at once—or was that my waistline growing?

A new prescription for my glasses and a pair of good insoles took care of the first two problems, but what about the extra inches? One of the perks of my new teaching job at an independent boarding school was free food for my entire family: three meals a day, seven days a week. And this was no ordinary cafeteria—we had a wealthy international boarding population among our students, and they expected the best. Eggs made to order, homemade waffles, pancakes with fresh fruit every morning. At lunch, a choice of several

hot entrées was served alongside a wrap and sandwich line—you tell the cafeteria workers what you want and they make it. Dinner was my favorite meal, especially since at the end of a ten-hour day, the last thing I felt like doing was cooking a big meal for my family—and there were no dishes to clean up! Best of all, there was a dessert bar—I could always count on the intensely rich chocolate layer cake to keep me buzzed for another couple hours of grading papers.

And did I mention that *the entire family* could have *as much food as we wanted*? Three meals a day? Seven days a week? And that it was all *free*? I began to understand why my petite friend Cindy gained 7 pounds every time she went on a cruise!

One October morning, I headed to the school gym before morning chapel, climbed down two flights of stairs, wriggled into my long-disused bathing suit, and eased into the pool. Even though the pool was indoors, the water was cold—no wimpy swimmers in northern New England. After I swam a few laps, my eyes started to sting—I had forgotten that my eyes are unusually sensitive to pool water. And that’s when Mr. Golden, the boisterous, lovable art teacher, paddled over to my lane. Mr. Golden (yes, that’s his real name!) wore a big float around his waist and used a kickboard to cruise around the pool. He was known throughout campus for attending every home game of every sport for something like forty years. He was a big, burly man with a heart as big as his bellowing voice.

“Come back tomorrow,” Mr. Golden said. “My ears are bad—I can’t go underwater anymore—I’ve got a great pair of goggles you can use.”

But I wasn’t so sure that I *wanted* to get up a half hour early the next day. And the water was so cold! Yet how could I refuse this thoughtful offer?

So I came back the next day. And the next. And the next.

Exercising in the morning makes me hungry, so I started eating

*I love your
sanctuary, Lord,
the place where your
glorious presence
dwells.*

PSALM 26:8, NLT

a healthy breakfast and less at lunch and dinner. After New Year's, I gave up chocolate, except on Sundays. When my daughter, Emma, was assigned the same lunch period as me, we began picking up a couple of veggie wraps from the cafeteria and eating together in the quiet oasis of my classroom—where no monster chocolate chip cookies could tempt me! At dinner, I started gravitating toward the salad bar instead of the dessert line. When the days grew warmer, I went on long walks while the kids finished their after-school activities.

By the time summer vacation arrived, my new eating and exercise habits were well established—and the extra inches around my middle had disappeared.

Suddenly, my forties didn't look so bad.

Matthew, my brilliant doctor-husband, has developed a medically proven, no-fail plan for patients who want to lose weight: eat less, exercise more. As a concerned mom, I offer an equally simple plan for people who want to start greening their homes: consume less, save more.

The basic principles of nutrition and health are a lot like the principles behind green living: Just as we need to be good stewards of the physical body God gave us, we need to take care of the physical planet that sustains all life. Both require some measure of discipline. Both result in major improvements when small changes are made over a period of time. And both bring joy—to us and our Creator.

Will the process always be easy? convenient? popular with other members of your family or neighborhood? No, I'd be lying if I said that the green way has been hassle free for our family. But the Bible does not promise us an easy life—just a purpose-filled one.

“ I [God] did not intend my creatures to make themselves servants and slaves to the world's pleasures. . . . They owe their first love to me. Everything else they should love and possess, as I told you, not as if they owned it but as something lent them. —*Catherine of Siena*
(1347–1380), *The Dialogue* ”

At first, some of the changes in this chapter may seem about as inviting as a cold pool on a New England winter morning. But if you persist, making small changes over the course of a year or more, I promise that you will find yourself living in a healthier, more joy-filled home with less baggage weighing you down and more time for family, friends, and God.

And suddenly your future, and your children's future, will look a little brighter.



Getting Started: Simple No-Cost Changes

The energy costs of two families living in *exactly* the same house can differ as much as 100 percent. This means you can *halve* your energy costs by changing a few simple behaviors.

- Turn down the temperature on your water heater to 120 degrees. (Look for a little metal box on the side of the water heater.)
- Do laundry in cold water and you can save up to \$63 per year!
- Turn your refrigerator and freezer to the warmest setting. (We've done it for years, with no adverse health effects!)
- Activate the "sleep" mode on your home office equipment. Use laptops rather than desktops when possible.
- Turn the thermostat up three degrees in summertime and down three degrees in wintertime—saving \$200 per year!
- Turn off lights, TVs, stereos, and computers when leaving the room.
- Hang clothes on the line to dry. (Even once a week helps!)
- Reduce shower time by at least two minutes.
- Close curtains at night during the winter and on hot days in the summer.
- Only do full loads when using the dishwasher, clothes washer, and dryer.

THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

Weighing In

When we need to shed a few pounds, doctors advise us to start by stepping on the scale. The same principle applies to lightening our impact on the planet. We need to see where we are, set goals, and measure our progress.

In Appendix A, you'll find the energy audit worksheet that our family used to begin our environmental journey. Take a few minutes to fill it out now. Once you have a baseline, you can set goals and make changes needed to live a less consumeristic, more God-centered life.

If you want to go one step further, contact your local utility provider to see if they offer energy audits. For a small fee (it's \$15 in our area), they will come to your house and check windows, doors, insulation, and appliances, and leave you with a personalized action plan for saving energy, including estimates of how much the upgrades may cost and how much you can expect to save.

Tools

Several organizations offer interactive tools for home energy check-ups on their Web sites. Many offer instant feedback.

- The Alliance to Save Energy (http://www.ase.org/section/_audience/consumers/homecheckup)
- The U.S. Department of Energy (<http://hes.lbl.gov>)
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy (http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=home_energy_yardstick.showStep2)



Twenty-three percent of the new homes in America are more than 3,000 square feet. The bigger the house, the more resources it consumes.

The Upside of Being Downwardly Mobile

When we moved to our 1960s ranch house, I left behind a stable full-time teaching position for a part-time, adjunct job at a Christian college, which paid a whopping \$8,000—the only income our family could count on that year. As my husband, Matthew, likes to say, we were the poster family for the downwardly mobile. He had already left his ER position four years earlier, and we were in an economic free fall once again. Needless to say, we did not have a lot of extra money to spend on home improvements. Instead, we first invested in inexpensive projects that had the quickest payback (making insulated curtains for windows, fixing leaky faucets and toilets, changing lightbulbs), and then we used the savings to pay for longer-term investments such as attic insulation and energy-efficient windows. (We took advantage of tax incentives that helped us pay for these larger energy-saving home improvements.) Since then, our electric bills have plummeted, and the savings go on year after year.

SAVE GREEN

Take that first step! An audit can help you save up to 30 percent on your energy bills.

Thermostat

We struggle with the thermostat settings in our family. Moving to Kentucky has made my life much easier because I'm the one who gets cold, but it's made Matthew's life more difficult since he has a hard time functioning in heat. We keep the heat low in winter—usually around sixty degrees during the day, and completely turned off at night. On very cold nights, I open the sink cabinet doors before I go to bed to be sure the pipes don't freeze. In the morning, I dress in multiple layers, brew a pot of hot tea, and use a small electric heater in my home office to take off the chill. In summer, we watch the weather closely—opening windows at night to cool the house down. The humidity in our area seems to increase signifi-

cantly in the late afternoon and evening, so that's when we briefly run the air conditioner.

In general, turn down the thermostat at night during the winter and when you're away from home; in the summertime, turn up the thermostat. Contrary to some common myths, it won't take any more energy to bring your house back to the desired temperature than it would to leave it at your optimum temperature all day. A programmable thermostat gives you much more flexibility to control your home's climate, and it pays for itself in one season. Adjusting your thermostat just three degrees year-round will save about \$200 on your heating and cooling bills.

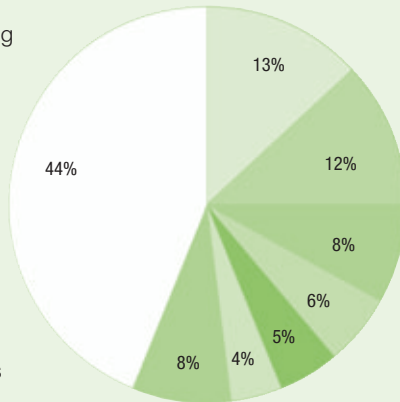
Green Power

More and more public utilities are offering a green power option that supports renewable resources. Most of our electricity comes from coal. Coal mining destroys mountains and creates far more pollution than any other energy source (mercury, sulfur dioxide,

Want to Save Money and Energy? Go After the Energy Hogs First!

Average home energy consumption:

- 44% Space heating and cooling
- 13% Water heating
- 12% Lighting
- 8% Refrigeration
- 6% Home electronics
- 5% Laundry appliances
- 4% Kitchen appliances
- 8% Other home energy users



nitrous oxides, or particulates). Call your local electricity provider to see if green power is available in your area, and make the switch. It will cost a bit more, but you will be showing love for our global neighbors and allowing your children and your children's children to breathe more freely.

This year, our April electricity bill was \$14. When our May bill came, Matthew was disappointed that it had gone up to \$18. But then I pointed out that our public utility had just added the green power option, and we had elected to pay an extra \$5 per month to promote alternative energy sources for our electricity. So our May bill energy usage was actually lower (\$13, including mandatory transmission fees and taxes), and we were more than offsetting our 122 kWh (kilowatt-hour) electricity usage for under \$20 per month. Conservation pays!



Loving our neighbors? Americans make up 5 percent of the world's population but use 26 percent of its energy.

Lighting

It's a myth that turning lights on and off uses more electricity than leaving them on. We taught our kids to turn lights off whenever they leave a room. Energy-efficient bulbs use one-quarter of the energy and last seven to ten times longer. Watch out for torchères (upright lamps). They often use lightbulbs of 300 watts or more—the equivalent of thirty or more energy-saving bulbs—and present dangerous fire hazards.

About 95 percent of the electrical current for standard lightbulbs creates heat rather than light. This makes energy-saving bulbs not only vastly more efficient, but also much safer. According to an EPA Energy Star fact sheet, if every American home replaced just one standard lightbulb with an energy-efficient bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes, retain more than

\$600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars. Changing our lightbulbs also saves thousands of lives lost due to respiratory illnesses and asthma attacks, especially among children and senior citizens—the very people God tells us to care for.

Green Light to Savings

Matthew has always been obsessed with light; our family has been the guinea pig of lighting technology. We have tried every new kind of lightbulb on the market, going back more than twenty years to those first energy-saving bulbs that buzzed and gave off a harsh light. When we moved the last time, a friend jokingly suggested that we start a Museum of Lightbulb History.

If you have been reluctant to buy energy-saving lightbulbs because you think they give off an unflattering light, give the new “soft” and “warm” bulbs a try. Their light is indistinguishable from regular lightbulbs—and the wide selection of bulbs available today makes it possible to find the right energy-saving bulb for every fixture.

I’ve often been asked about people who need extra reading light, especially our growing elderly population. Matthew just turned fifty, but he’s had some medical problems with his eyesight that go beyond the normal aging process. No worries! Lightbulbs are available in every imaginable wattage; the last time we went to the hardware store, we saw 300 watt–equivalent compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs—enough for even the most extreme lighting needs. They also now come in different base sizes. Our son Clark’s apartment for medical school came with wall sconces that use candelabra bulbs. We considered buying new sconces, but then found CFL bulbs that screw right in. Several lightbulb manufacturers even make CFLs designed for use on dimmer switches.

Energy-saving bulbs do cost more initially, but the average payback in energy savings is less than a year, even sooner if you use rebates or find them on sale. Conventional bulbs use the most energy, followed by halogens, then compact fluorescents, and the least energy users of all (but not widely available yet),

light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs. The current LED bulbs do not give off as much light, so we use them in areas that don't require bright lighting—two in the basement and two outside—but need to be on frequently. Dimming your lights also can cut back on electricity bills.

GO GREEN

Energy-saving lightbulbs use about one-quarter the energy of standard lightbulbs and last up to ten times longer.

Windows

We waited nearly two years until we could afford to replace the single-paned, aluminum-framed windows that came with our 1960s house. Matthew gave the two window installers an extra \$50 each so that they would beef up the insulation around each



What about Mercury?

One of the most common questions we get on the road is about the mercury in CFL bulbs. It's true: a CFL bulb contains a minuscule amount of mercury (5 mg), about one-fifth of the mercury found in the average watch battery and less than 1/600th of the mercury found in a home thermostat. However, if you do the math, the tiny amount they contain is dwarfed by the extra amount of mercury that coal-burning power stations emit to power the much-less-efficient incandescent bulb. A power plant will emit 10 mg of mercury in order to produce the amount of electricity needed to run an incandescent bulb compared to emitting only 2.4 mg of mercury to run a CFL for the same length of time.

Those signs you see when you go fishing, warning children and pregnant women to avoid eating the catch, are not because of toxins dumped into the water. The concern is primarily because of the mercury emitted from coal-fired power plants that settles in our rivers and lakes. To properly dispose of your burned-out CFL, just drop it off at a local Home Depot or IKEA store, or check out <http://www.earth911.org> for other safe disposal options. Bottom line: using compact fluorescents cuts back on your electric bill and is safer for the environment.

of the windows and seal them extra tight. The new windows have made a *huge* difference—our house is quieter and much more comfortable—with lower energy bills than ever. Before selecting an installer, we made sure that the company routinely recycled all of the window glass and aluminum.

In general, double- or triple-pane high-efficiency windows can save your family \$340 each year, depending on climate. They also improve comfort in both winter and summer. If you can't afford to replace windows right away, install storm windows or consider temporary fixes for your leaky windows, such as plastic film kits that act like an interior storm window.

“ The creation is quite like a spacious and splendid house, provided and filled with the most exquisite and the most abundant furnishings. Everything in it tells us of God.

—John Calvin (1509–1564), *Institutes* 1:14 ”

Curtains

Cut heat transfer by one-third by hanging heavy, lined curtains. In summer, keep the curtains closed during the day, and open both curtains and windows at night for natural ventilation. In winter, closing the curtains at night and opening them on sunny days can have a huge impact on your energy bill, especially if you use insulated curtains.

Lined curtains do an amazing job of keeping the heat in during the winter and out in the summer. According to *The Green Book*, if we all hung curtains for extra insulation, it would save the same amount of energy that the entire country of Japan uses.

Awnings

Remember awnings? Yes, they are an investment, but they will keep your home so much cooler during summertime, especially if you do not have energy-efficient windows. When speaking at a college in North Carolina, I noticed that all of the older homes still had beautiful, practical awnings, while not one of the newer homes did—

our grandparents knew best! Other energy-saving summer options include fabric patio covers and solar window screens. Do a little research to see whether or not these are available in your area.

Energy monitoring

How low can you go? You can get a real-time reading of your home energy use by purchasing an energy monitoring device such as The Energy Detective (TED), which costs about \$140 (<http://www.theenergydetective.com>).

After being hooked up to your circuit breaker box by a handy homeowner or electrician, TED provides a small display that shows your household electricity usage in real time, and then projects your monthly bill.

Just as the energy-consumption display on our Toyota Prius has taught me to adjust my driving habits, TED claims that real-time energy feedback can help reduce your energy consumption by as much as 15 to

*So don't be
dismayed when the
wicked grow rich and their
homes become ever more
splendid. For when they die, they
take nothing with them. Their
wealth will not follow them
into the grave.*

PSALM 49:16-17, NLT

20 percent, translating into savings of hundreds of dollars. And it can be a fun way to get the whole family on the energy-saving bandwagon. The bottom line: if you can measure it, you can manage it. Make small adjustments throughout the day and see how quickly the savings add up. If you want to know exactly how much energy your appliances use, including when they are “off,” you can purchase a Kill A Watt Electricity Usage Monitor for about \$20 (available at Amazon.com and other Internet stores). Just plug the appliance into the meter, and it will help you see where your energy dollars are going. Spread the savings: offer to lend the watt meter to your church facility manager, extended family, and neighbors. For instance, a side-by-side refrigerator will almost always use more energy than a refrigerator with a freezer on the top or bottom

How Much Energy Do You Use?

The amount of energy that appliances use varies widely from model to model, so be sure to compare the yellow energy-use tags and look for Energy Star models. However, keep in mind that a product receives an Energy Star rating only because it uses less energy than others *in its class*.

The table below will help you identify the energy guzzlers in your home; remember that many electronic components, such as stereos, DVD players, and TVs, continue to burn watts even when turned off.

| APPLIANCE | AVERAGE WATTS USED PER HOUR |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Fluorescent lightbulb | 13 |
| Conventional lightbulb | 60 |
| Exhaust fan | 75 (turn it off as soon as you can) |
| Laptop computer | 50 |
| Stereo | 100 |
| Television | 100 (High Definition uses more!) |
| VCR/DVD player | 22 |
| Refrigerator/freezer | 800 (biggest overall user because it is left on 24-7) |
| Desktop computer | 150 (many families leave them on 24-7) |
| Hair dryer | 1,200 (hair appliances are energy intensive) |
| Microwave | 750 (saves energy when used to precook) |
| Vacuum cleaner | 800 |
| Toaster | 1,000 |
| Iron | 1,000 |
| Dishwasher | 1,200–2,400 (higher when using heat dry option) |
| Small portable heater | 1,000 |
| Clothes dryer | 1,800–5,000 |
| Electric stove (1 burner) | 1,300 |
| Large portable heater | 2,000 (size does matter!) |
| Oven | 2,150 |
| Electric stove (everything on) | 11,500 |

of equivalent size. And size does count—in general the smaller the appliance, the less energy it will use.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Green living leads to green savings, and a less consumeristic lifestyle leads to more time with family, friends, and God.

When I talk with other moms about practical ways to save money and green up our lives, our discussions often lead us to even deeper, more basic questions: living in an age of great wealth and physical ease, why do we feel lonelier and less content than ever before?

The answer, I believe, begins at home. Just think about all the electronic devices that did not exist when our grandparents were born: clothes dryers, clock radios, blow-dryers, TVs, microwaves, toaster ovens, blenders, cell phones, computers, iPods, printers, VCRs, DVD players, Xbox . . . the list goes on and on. With all of these gadgets in our homes, Americans now consume more than twice as much as they did fifty years ago. The average house size in the United States has more than doubled since the 1950s to 2,350 square feet—but this consumer frenzy doesn't seem to be making us happy. In fact, it's making us less happy. According to Gary Gardner, senior researcher at Worldwatch Institute and author of *Inspiring Progress: Religions' Contributions to Sustainable Development*, as a country, our national happiness peaked in the 1950s, and our contentedness continues to decline as household incomes increase.

Our houses are filled with labor-saving devices, but we have less time for families, friends, and God. We work longer and longer hours, but no one is home to enjoy our wealth. In those rare times when families are in the house together, we separate ourselves with TVs, headphones, and computers, sharing only a few minutes a day of meaningful conversation with our spouses or children.

All of this focus on materialism comes at a huge cost—financially, spiritually, relationally, and environmentally. Yet there is great hope: little changes made by a lot of people can make a big difference. We don't need to give up all modern conveniences, shivering in unheated rooms; however, we do need to change

wasteful practices and bring our lifestyles more in line with our values. Practicing the Christian disciplines—sacrificing a bit of comfort to honor God’s creation—will bring joy to your family while drawing you closer to him.

Stewardship is a journey, not a destination. When I compare my life to the meek and humble example that Jesus set, I know that I have only taken the first few steps. Yet having an eternal benchmark gives purpose to my journey. If we can reduce our impact by 10 percent a year, we are on the right road.

IN THE KITCHEN

Refrigerator

Your refrigerator is the biggest energy-using appliance in the kitchen because it is on 24-7. For the last ten years, we’ve kept our refrigerator and freezer on the warmest-possible setting, with no problems beyond slightly softened ice cream. Matthew is a doctor, so I trust he would tell me if there were serious health ramifications in doing this!



Eight Low-Cost, High-Payback Home Improvements

- Purchase a programmable thermostat and use it to turn on heat or a/c just before you wake up or come home.
- Replace furnace and air-conditioning filters at least three times a year.
- Caulk between window frames, door frames, and walls.
- Add storm windows or use plastic film kits to improve single-pane windows.
- Insulate water heater and pipes, and turn water heater down to 120 degrees.
- Install motion sensors, dimmers, and timers for indoor and outdoor lighting.
- Install ceiling or other fans to cut down on air-conditioning costs.
- Change lightbulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs

Consider these other energy-saving ideas for your refrigerator:

- Decide what you want before you open the door—refrigerator gazing can cost \$30–\$60 per year.
- Put hot food in a cold water bath or place it outside in cold weather before refrigerating, so less energy is required to keep it cool.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer full. Doing so uses less energy because less cooling is lost each time you open the refrigerator.
- Defrost food in the refrigerator; it will keep the refrigerator cooler.
- Make sure the seals are in good shape. Try this quick test: Shut the fridge and freezer door on a dollar bill. If you can pull it out easily, your door seals are damaged and need to be replaced.
- Give your refrigerator room to breathe. Do not jam the refrigerator against the wall, and keep at least 3 inches clear above it in order to allow for proper airflow.
- Unplug extra refrigerators (such as those in your garage or basement) when not in use.
- Disconnect automatic ice makers, which add heat to the freezer to release the cubes.

SAVE GREEN

Nearly 20 percent of homes have at least two refrigerators. The older the model, the more energy it uses. Consider giving your second refrigerator to a family in need. In addition to helping someone out, you will also be saving up to \$100 per year on your electricity bill.

Sink

Most modern faucets have aerators (wire mesh attachments). If yours does not, you can install one pretty easily. These inexpen-

sive aerators or flow valves, found at your local hardware store, can reduce your water flow by half without reducing water pressure.

Dish washing

There's quite a bit of controversy over which method uses more water and energy: hand washing or the dishwasher. The average dishwasher uses more than 10 gallons of water; energy-efficient dishwashers use about half that. My family washes dishes by hand, using 3–5 gallons a day. We try to wash the cleaner dishes first, turning off the tap while we scrub and rinsing with cold water. Most of the year we collect that water in a tub and reuse it to refresh our garden.

In addition to using more water, dishwashers also require electricity to run the motor; hand washing does not. Think about it: it takes energy to power your dishwasher for forty-five minutes per cycle, whereas children who regularly participate in washing and drying dishes require *zero* electricity. Some of Emma's and Clark's fondest memories are when they've been making up silly songs as they do the dishes together.

Dishwashers use anywhere from 331 (Energy Star) to 1,000 (conventional) kWh per year. Washing by hand can save \$100 per year on your electricity bill—and it can teach your children the value of working cooperatively.



Have Money, but No Time?

Hire an energy-performance contractor. The Department of Energy and EPA have started a program called Home Performance with Energy Star. These specially trained contractors conduct a whole-house energy audit and make specific recommendations for saving energy in your home. For an additional fee, some contractors will then implement the suggestions that you approve. What a great example of the growing green economy and job market! To see if the program is available in your state, visit http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_improvement.hm_improvement_hpwes_partners.

If you do use the dishwasher, run full loads and avoid prerinsing before putting dishes in—you could save up to 20 gallons of water per load or 7,300 gallons per year—as much as the average person drinks in a lifetime. Turn the dishwasher completely off when the cycle is finished. To save even more, avoid using the boosted cleaning and heated dry options and air dry the dishes instead.

Detergent

While the government no longer permits phosphates in laundry detergents, they do allow them in automatic dishwasher soaps. When

phosphates end up in rivers and coastal areas, they can “fertilize” algae populations, leading to large algal blooms, which in turn can choke out plant and animal life in aquatic ecosystems and contribute to aquatic dead zones. But there is good news: store-brand, environmentally friendly cleaning products now cost about

““ The seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man’s moral crisis. . . . Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life.

—Pope John Paul II (1920–2005), *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* ””

the same as standard cleaning products. Back when we still used a dishwasher, we squirted about one teaspoon of phosphate-free dishwashing liquid into the detergent dispenser instead of dishwasher powder, and the dishes always came out sparkling clean.

Paper products

Our family uses an average of one roll of paper towels every two to three years. Rather than paper, we use cloth towels for cleaning up. We drain bacon on paper grocery bags. When we do purchase paper products, we make sure they are made from recycled paper. We purchase our 100 percent recycled toilet paper in bulk from an office supply store—it’s cheaper than “regular” toilet tissue and oh-so-much better for the forests.

For parties, draft a couple of teens to wash and dry dishes so you don't have to rely on paper products. We fed fifty teenagers lasagna for Clark's birthday party last year, with Emma and her roommate keeping a fresh supply of clean dishes available all night. Don't have enough plates? Ask friends to bring their own, or borrow a set from a neighbor.

Cleaning products

America has become bacteria-phobic—and the overuse of antibacterial soaps is leading to an unhealthy rise in resistant bacteria. Matthew, an ER doctor, always joked around the house that he did not believe in the germ theory of disease. In reality, he did not want his kids to become the stereotypical obsessive-compulsive, hypochondriac doctor's kids, so we've always taken a rather laid-back attitude toward germs—and our kids are healthier for it.

Look for cleaning products that are nontoxic, biodegradable, and made from renewable resources (not petroleum). Green cleaning products are now readily available at grocery, office supply, and home improvement stores—even Clorox now offers a green cleaning product line! The cheapest solution? I've found that baking soda or vinegar mixed with warm water can handle almost any cleaning job. Baking soda also works great as a scouring powder



Hugging Trees for Jesus

From Genesis to Revelation, it is clear that God loves trees.

Trees are mentioned one thousand times in the Bible, more than any living thing other than humans. The symbol of God is the tree of life, Abraham met the Lord under the oaks of Mamre, Moses heard God speak from a bush that would not burn, and Deborah held court under palm trees.

Before his ministry started, Jesus worked with trees; at the end of his ministry, he stretched out his calloused carpenter hands for our salvation and hugged a tree—the cross he bore for us. Using recycled paper is one way of showing that we love what God loves!

in sinks and on pans. (Use on stainless steel, copper, and iron pans but not on aluminum pans—baking soda can make shiny aluminum pans oxidize or discolor a bit.)

Pest control

The first step to reducing pests and insects in the kitchen is to remove the source that is attracting them. Don't allow food scraps to linger on counters or floors. Dripping faucets and soaking dishes can also serve as a water source, enticing insects into the kitchen. Keep food staples that insects find attractive—such as flour, pasta, and cornmeal—in airtight containers or in the refrigerator.

There are many natural remedies you can use to control pests. If ants are a problem, follow the trail to see where they are entering and sprinkle chili pepper, dried peppermint, or borax to deter them. Roaches can be eliminated by sprinkling four parts borax, two parts flour, and one part sugar or cocoa in infested areas—



Green Cleaning

| INSTEAD OF | USE THIS |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Glass cleaner and paper towels | White vinegar and lint-free cloth |
| Powder bleach | Borax |
| Carpet cleaner | Cornstarch or baking soda |
| Scrubbing powder (like Ajax) | Baking soda |
| All-purpose cleaner | Liquid castile soap and baking soda or borax. Dilute for floors, walls, and counters. |
| Drain opener | Try plunging before chemicals. If plunging does not work, pour one cup of baking soda down the drain, followed by one cup of vinegar. One minute later, add one pint of hot water. (Stand back because the liquid can come back up toward you.) |

For more nontoxic cleaning recipes, visit <http://www.greenerchoices.org>.

You can save as much as \$580 each year by making your own homemade cleaning products.

roaches will carry the mixture back to their nests and die. Use under the sink and in back of cabinets to prevent further infestations. Borax is available in the grocery store alongside laundry soaps. Be sure to keep borax away from children.

Garbage disposal

Compost your waste instead of using energy to run the disposal. If you must run the disposal, use cold water. Disposal waste can cost you money by clogging pipes and septic systems and can disrupt water and soil ecosystems.

Trash bags

Reuse grocery bags to line your trash cans. When we occasionally forget to bring cloth bags into the store, we ask for paper and use them under the sink for trash. Many grocery stores are now offering to recycle plastic bags rather than having them clutter the landscape and pollute the seas. Some cities and countries are even outlawing them.

Kitchen remodeling

If you decide to remodel, avoid particle board (unless it is one of the new *green* particle board products), vinyl, and laminates. Make sure you include space for a pantry (saves trips to the store) and a recycling center (close to the hub of activity). Post your old cabinets, countertops, and appliances on classified advertising Web sites like <http://www.freecycle.org> or <http://www.craigslist.org>, so someone else can give them another life. We have even given away used drywall on Freecycle to someone building a shop in his backyard!

Energy Star appliances

When it's time to replace appliances, look for the bright yellow tags that provide annual energy-usage comparisons and the Energy Star symbol. Buy the smallest appliance to meet your needs. If you can only replace one kitchen appliance, replace the refrigerator.

IN THE BATHROOM

Shower

If you tried a low-flow showerhead years ago and were not satisfied—try again. They've improved dramatically. Readily available at hardware and home improvement stores, low-flow showerheads cost less than \$10, and installation is about as simple as screwing in a lightbulb. Standard showerheads use 4–6 gallons per minute. Water-efficient showerheads cut that back to 1.5–2 gallons. In one year, a family of four can save up to 18,200 gallons of water as well as the energy used to heat that water. Reduce even further: shower every other day in winter, cut back on your shower time by a couple of minutes, or turn off the water flow while you shampoo and shave.

Use a water-resistant cloth shower curtain instead of vinyl, or consider a glass door system. Plastic curtains and liners are not recyclable and end up in landfills.

SAVE GREEN

About 25 percent of the water supplied to the average American home is used for showers. Installing a low-flow showerhead can save a family of four 350 gallons of water each week—about \$73 per year.

Bath

In general, baths use three times more water than showers. If you do take a bath, plug the drain before you turn on the faucet. The average tub faucet runs 3–5 gallons per minute, so savings add up

fast. And scoop up the water afterward to use on your garden or indoor plants.



If every American used one gallon less of water per day, we would save more than 100 billion gallons per year. That's enough to supply the entire population of Mozambique with water for five years.

Toilet

When Matthew was speaking at a seminary, one woman from a rural village in South Korea confessed that the biggest surprise to her when coming to the United States was not the big grocery stores or the fast-food restaurants; it was the fact that she had to empty her bladder into drinking water.

The 1960s home we purchased has two original standard toilets that use 3.5 gallons per flush. We immediately cut that in half by inserting bricks and a one-gallon milk jug filled with water (clean one-liter soda bottles work too) into the toilet's water tank, thus reducing the amount of water the toilet uses each time the tank fills up.

Modern high-efficiency toilets use less than 2 gallons per flush. Even better are dual flush toilets—one button for big flushes (1.6 gallons) and one for small (.9 gallon).

If your toilet is leaking, get it fixed. A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons of water every day.



Toilets are the biggest water users in the home. Only 3 percent of the earth's water is fresh, yet Americans are flushing 4.8 billion gallons of freshwater down the drain every day. As much as 40 percent of our drinking water is flushed down toilets. Flush once less per day and you will save as much water as the average person in Africa uses all day for drinking, cooking, bathing, and cleaning.

Sink

Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth. Savings for an average family of four? A whopping 48 gallons a day—as much as \$70 per year!



The average U.S. household consumes more than seventy times as much water every year as the average home in Ghana.

Shaving

Only turn on the water when rinsing the razor, or try rinsing the razor in a cup filled with warm water.

Alternative: brush your teeth while you wait for the water to warm up for your shave. Water savings: up to 1,825 gallons per year, enough to fill the bathtub thirty-five times.

Matthew keeps a pitcher by the bathroom sink and collects the water that runs while he's waiting for it to turn warm, then he uses that water for rinsing dishes or watering plants.

Instead of using shaving cream, our son, Clark, shaves with old-fashioned shaving soap and a brush. He saves money while keeping aerosol cans out of the landfills.

Speaking of landfills: stop using disposable razors. Seek out a more permanent replacement. Best bet: single-blade razors with no plastic packaging.



Two billion disposable razors end up in landfills annually.

Health-care products

The average American spends about \$600 per year on soaps, toiletries, and cosmetics. Some hair products, shampoos, deodorants,

and perfumes contain active ingredients that are dangerous in high doses. Many cosmetics and health-care products contain known carcinogens—others are simply untested. There is no universal safety test for health-care products. Used in small amounts, many may be harmless, but when washed down the drain, their cumulative effect rivals that of agrochemicals.

Good news: health-food chain stores are carrying natural product alternatives (store brands), so you can protect your family's health without spending a lot more. Before purchasing, make sure that containers can be recycled by checking for the triangular recycling symbol on the bottom.

Because I work at home now, I rarely wear makeup. When I do, my whole routine takes less than five minutes. I keep it simple—one tube that acts as foundation and concealer, one tube for lip and cheek color, and a little mascara along the tips of my lashes. If I'm going someplace fancy, I wait until my hair is 90 percent dry, and then I style it quickly with a blow-dryer. For everyday, my "style" is a low-key wash-and-wear—why fight nature? It helps to have a husband who supports a low-maintenance look: on my last birthday, when Matthew wrote me a card listing the forty-seven reasons why he loves me, number six was "You don't dye your silver hair."

GO GREEN

Of the many thousands of synthetic chemicals used in health-care items, less than 20 percent have been tested for acute effects and less than 10 percent have been tested for reproductive, mutagenic, or chronic effects.

IN THE BEDROOM

Bedding

Buy quality products that don't have to be replaced every few years. We pile on extra blankets in the winter so we can turn the heat off at night. Wear layers if you—like me!—get colder than

your spouse. If you can afford it, purchase organic cotton bedding—you will be resting your head eight hours each night on bedding with fewer chemicals and protecting future generations from the high cost of chemical-intensive agribusiness. Looking for a cost/benefit compromise? Try bedding with “transitional cotton”—made from fields that have committed to organic growing practices but have not yet completed the organic certification process.

Closets

When it comes to clothing, less is more. My husband is the ultimate example of wardrobe simplicity. Before going on a speaking engagement, he asks me if he should wear Outfit A (the suit) or Outfit B (khaki pants, white shirt, tie, and blue sports jacket). In very casual settings, he opts for Outfit B—minus (Outfit B, minus the tie or jacket).

Alas, it’s not so simple for women. I try to stick to classic fashions and colors that work for me and consciously avoid fashion magazines so I don’t get sucked into the latest trends. I’m only too happy to accept hand-me-downs from friends and relatives. In fact, most of what’s in my closet is secondhand.

Matthew has gotten me in the habit of cleaning my closet out

at least once a year. I always enlist my daughter, Emma, to help—if I haven’t worn an item in the last year, she makes sure I pass it along to someone who can make good use of it through a refugee organization, Goodwill, St. Vincent de Paul, or the Salvation Army.

“ The family needs a home, a fit environment in which to develop its proper relationships. *For the human family, this home is the earth, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion.* —Pope Benedict XVI, (1927–), *The Human Family, A Community of Peace* ”

Shopping

Bring an accountability friend (or daughter) when shopping and help each other say no to any impulse purchases. Never shop just for fun; always have a purpose, and stick to it. Try to buy used whenever possible, and always combine trips. If you are considering a major purchase, wait a month. In most cases, you'll find that you forgot about it, or can do without.



After food, clothing has the highest environmental impact of any consumer activity. Nearly 40,000 gallons of water are used in the production and transport of new clothes bought by the average American household—each year!

Fabrics

When Matthew and I first married nearly thirty years ago, I tried to buy cotton fabrics because I assumed they were more natural. Not necessarily so. Although synthetics such as nylon, polyester, and Lycra are made from fossil fuels, natural fibers are not always the best answer. I've since learned that cotton is the most chemical-intensive crop—each pound of cotton uses ten to eighteen applications of herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides and 3,800 gallons of water. Wool requires even more water—22,400 gallons of water per pound—and causes soil compaction and habitat loss due to fertilizer-dependent pastures. And hybrid fabrics, such as poly-cotton blends, are impossible to recycle.

What to wear? When possible, look for chemical-free organic cotton, linen, wool, and hemp fabrics. Even in discount stores, you can now find clothing made from “transitional cotton.”



Globally, one-quarter of all pesticides are used on cotton crops.

Secondhand clothes

Jesus told us to be more like the birds and the lilies; it's what's *in* us—not *on* us—that matters. Our family buys a large portion of our clothes from secondhand stores. Buying used means less land must be used to grow crops for clothing, and new items don't need to be manufactured and transported. Look for quality items that will stay in style and last a long time.

I rely on polar fleece (mine is made from recycled pop bottles) for warm layering. As I write this, I'm wearing my \$5 polar fleece from Goodwill, which has kept me toasty for years and still looks nearly new.

*Unless the
Lord builds a house,
the work of the
builders is wasted.*

PSALM 127:1, NLT

At a recent faith and environment conference, I looked at our daughter, Emma, and realized that everything we both were wearing was from a secondhand store. I unashamedly tell people that the majority of the clothes in my closet are from Goodwill, including my favorite traveling dress, which happens to be an Ann Taylor design.

Layers

Before clothes became a fashion statement, people wore layers to survive in a world with no artificial heat or air-conditioning. Clothes are the most efficient form of insulation. If you live in a colder climate, warm your body, not your entire house. Each morning, I check the weather and dress accordingly.

Goodwill/God's Will

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. —ROMANS 12:2

Emma and I usually go Goodwill shopping together—mother/daughter bonding time. But recently I needed another church dress, so I did something very rare: I went shopping *alone*.

I stopped at the store on my way home from a meeting in Lexington. It took me about ten minutes to sift through the dresses, try a few on, and decide on a real “find” that would travel well and be great for both meetings and church.

That’s when I made my mistake. Though I didn’t *need* anything else, I thought it wouldn’t hurt to look at the shirts while I was there. Then I gravitated toward the sweaters and light-weight jackets—I always need to wear layers around the house because we try to use the heat as little as possible. So shopping a bit longer would be the environmentally sensible thing to do—right?

Wrong. One hour and eight additional items later, I headed for the cash register. The monetary cost was negligible, as was the environmental cost—these were used clothes, after all, and I hadn’t driven even a foot out of my way to get here. But the “too much stuff” weight was immense. When I got home, I tried on my purchases for Emma. She helped me, as she usually does in the store, to say no to all but the dress and one shirt. It’s not that the other clothes didn’t look okay or fit right—I just didn’t need them. And so, when my work calls me back to Lexington in a few days, I will swing by Goodwill and give back all but these two items. And I will feel much lighter. Consider it a \$12 donation to a good cause and a very cheap reminder about confusing wants with needs.

I had forgotten an important lesson: the problem lies not in us owning things, but in things owning us.



What Did Jesus Own?

What did Jesus own? A robe, some sandals, maybe a walking stick—we’ll never know for sure, but the Bible is pretty clear that he and his disciples did not have lots of material things weighing them down.

When I look at all the stuff in my closets, the parable of the rich young man who was unwilling to give up his possessions to follow Christ hits uncomfortably close to home (Luke 18:18-23).

What does Nancy own? Too much to list! Maybe it’s time to start a new campaign: I Clean Closets for Jesus!

Furniture

Like secondhand clothing stores, secondhand furniture also can save resources used in the manufacturing and transportation process. Check out <http://www.craigslist.org> for local furniture listings. When buying new, look for furnishings with labels saying that they are made from sustainably harvested wood or recycled materials rather than from veneer-covered particle board, which can cause indoor air pollution through noxious off-gassing (the evaporation of volatile chemicals that you may continue to breathe in for years).

At this moment I am writing at the oak desk that Matthew and I found in a used furniture store when we first got married. Matthew, a carpenter at the time (how handy!), refinished the desk, and I've been using it now for nearly three decades—with the hope of enjoying it for three more. It's been through nine moves with us and has endured a myriad of projects—college and graduate school papers, Matthew's medical school applications, bills, the kids' homework, manuscripts, and paperwork for our nonprofit organization, Blessed Earth. This desk has been central to every season of our lives together. It's more beautiful than ever—the water glass rings just add a bit more character (and fond memories) to the wood someone first planed a century or more ago. Our dining room table and chairs, Matthew's desk, Clark's bed—they all have similar stories. Most of the other furniture in our house was handmade by a friend who manages his wood lot using draft horses—the least harmful way to harvest lumber—ensuring that his land will be both beautiful and financially productive for generations to come.

Floor coverings

Nearly all carpet is petroleum based, with the exception of wool. Carpet making is water and chemical intensive, even before the dyeing process creates millions of gallons of polluted wastewater. But the worst part of carpet manufacturing is the volatile organic compounds in the adhesives—benzene and toluene. These are well-

recognized health hazards, adding to indoor air pollution. In addition, because of mold and dust mites that are impossible to fully remove no matter how often you steam clean, doctors advise that people with allergies or asthma avoid carpeting their homes.

Better options? Area rugs that can be vacuumed on both sides and shaken out, wool carpet, and carpet made from recycled materials. Even better, use bamboo, cork, wood, or other natural materials. Look for labels indicating that these materials were grown sustainably.

One of the things that motivated us to select our 1960s ranch-style home was its real oak floors. We removed the stained carpet in two bedrooms and revealed the wood floors beneath—they look great and will last several more lifetimes.

Fans

We have ceiling fans in the three main bedrooms of our home, as well as in the family room/kitchen area. When the fan in the family room needed to be replaced, we chose an Energy Star model.



The Green Room

Want to shop for sustainable furniture online? These sites will get you started:

- <http://www.ecobedroom.com>
- <http://www.greenerlifestyles.com>
- <http://www.pristineplanet.com>
- <http://www.steelcase.com>
- <http://www.vivaterra.com>

Always be sure to check for the Forest Stewardship Council seal of approval, which certifies the use of sustainably grown lumber. This seal ensures that the wood was harvested from a healthy forest, and not clear-cut from a tropical rainforest or the ancestral homelands of forest-dependent indigenous people.

SAVE GREEN

Stay cool all night for less—consider installing a ceiling fan over your bed. It costs sixteen times more to run a room air conditioner than a ceiling fan; it costs forty-three times more to run a central air conditioner than a ceiling fan.

Electronics

We made a rule long ago—no TVs or computers in the bedrooms. Placing TVs and computers in children’s bedrooms promotes separation, not unity. Falling asleep with the TV running is a huge waste of energy.

GO GREEN

Most video recorders and cable boxes stay on 24-7. Even in standby mode, they consume 85 percent of the power that they use while turned on.

IN THE FAMILY ROOM**Fireplace**

Only open the fireplace damper when you are using the fireplace. If possible, burn wood from a sustainably managed wood lot—we get our wood supply from fallen trees. Let your neighbors know that you are happy to saw (or hire someone to saw) their fallen trees as well. When a storm knocked over our neighbor’s maple last week, it resulted in a one cord windfall for us!

SAVE GREEN

An open damper can allow 8 percent of your home’s heat to go up the chimney. In summer, an open damper can add about \$100 to your cooling costs. Adding a chimney balloon could save you \$200 or more on energy costs.

Because a chimney damper is frequently heated and cooled, it can warp or break over time, causing cold drafts to enter your home and heat to escape. An inflated chimney balloon, also called a chimney pillow, prevents this heat loss by acting as a plug, saving you money, heat, and comfort. Google “chimney balloon” and “chimney pillow” to learn more about sources and proper sizing.

Wood-burning stoves are far more efficient than open fireplaces. If you have a fireplace that is never used, close the damper and stuff it loosely with fiberglass batting, or insert a balloon especially designed for this purpose. Either option will allow some air movement while still preventing major heating or cooling losses.

Matches

Use matches instead of lighters. About 1.5 billion disposable lighters end up in landfills and incinerators each year. The plastic casings and butane fuel from lighters are made from petroleum products. Petroleum products are finite—and are quickly becoming scarcer, as evidenced by rising fuel prices.

If you do use a lighter, invest in one that can be refilled.

Junk mail

You can reduce the amount of junk mail you receive by registering at <https://www.dmachoice.org>. (It costs \$1 if you register by mail; it's free if you register online.) I reregister every couple of years and also whenever we've moved. If a company sends me a catalog, I call the toll-free number and ask them to unsubscribe me. We recycle the junk mail we do receive, including envelopes with plastic windows.

For more ways to reduce junk mail, visit <http://www.newdream.org>.

Eliminate the source of temptation: the average household could save \$1,400 per year by banning mail-order catalogs from the house. To decline unsolicited credit card offers, visit <http://www.optoutprescreen.com>.

Paper

Purchase recycled paper. Paper that contains 30 percent postconsumer waste costs about the same as regular paper; 100 percent recycled will cost a bit more, but saves trees for your children to enjoy. Just as important—recycling your paper uses much less water and energy than making new paper.

Printers

Refilled ink cartridges cost far less than new ink, with identical results. Many offices and schools now collect used ink cartridges as fundraisers. If you aren't recycling your ink cartridges, try <http://www.fundingfactory.com>, which has already doled out \$10.5 million to schools and nonprofit organizations. Funding-Factory can help you recycle cell phones for profit as well.



Just Say No to Junk

More than 100 million trees' worth of bulk mail arrives in American mailboxes each year.

About 6 million tons of catalogs and other direct mailings end up in the U.S. municipal solid waste stream—enough to fill over 470,000 garbage trucks.

California's state and local governments spend \$500,000 each year collecting and disposing of AOL's direct-mail disks alone.

The production and disposal of junk mail consumes more energy than 2.8 million cars.

Computers

Our family has made the switch to laptop computers because they use significantly less energy than desktops. Kick the habit of leaving the computer on all day, and always be sure to shut the computer down completely at night.

SAVE GREEN

Work from home? Replacing existing office equipment with Energy Star-qualified products can cut annual energy bills by 30 percent.

Phantom loads

That little green or red light emitted by your TV, DVD player, stereo, or computer means that the system is still partially on, thereby causing what is known as a phantom load (energy consumed by products even when they are turned off). About 5 percent of a household's energy is wasted on phantom loads, costing U.S. consumers about \$8 billion annually. Even in standby or sleep mode, appliances can be using up to 85 percent of their full power. In fact, audio equipment in America actually uses more energy when it is off than when it is on. When you are not listening to music (most of the time!), your equipment is still partially powered; even a little bit of energy being used 24-7 adds up to a lot. Avoid phantom loads by purchasing smart power strips that allow you to turn the power completely off at the source. Unplug infrequently used electronics.

GO GREEN

In the average household, eight appliances are left on standby mode at any one time. The typical TV is left on standby seventeen hours per day.

Throws

We keep two heavy polar fleece blankets in the family room to stay warm and cozy even when the heat is turned down. Remember—the point is to warm your body, not your whole house.



Need another reason to invite friends over during the winter?

Each person in your home generates the same amount of warmth as a 100-watt heater.

Our Old Kentucky Home

When we moved from New Hampshire to Kentucky, it gave us the opportunity to simplify by giving away a lot of stuff that was still cluttering our lives. Clothes went to the Salvation Army, art supplies to a kindergarten teacher, books to libraries hit by a hurricane, and tools to a church friend starting a second career as a carpenter.

Since moving in, we've made a number of cost-effective simple changes or additions to our new, old house. The first thing we did was change all the lightbulbs in the house to compact fluorescents. Matthew also put our stereo and our son's computer on a power switch, eliminating the phantom loads.

We needed to purchase a new washing machine and a refrigerator. At the local home center, I picked out a front-load washer. Using the Energy Star comparison tags, I also found a standard refrigerator that uses 445 kWh per year, much more efficient than others in its class. Matthew lowered the energy use of our new refrigerator even more by turning off the automatic ice maker—ice makers run a heating element so that the ice slides out easily.

We chose not to purchase a clothes dryer. Instead, Matthew restrung an abandoned clothesline in the backyard. Friends helped us dismantle an unsafe, rickety porch on the back of the house, and Matthew and our son, Clark, built a new one using decking made of recycled soda bottles, thus eliminating the need for toxic stains or paints.

I joined the local <http://www.freecycle.org> and found a free composting bin for the backyard, which eliminates the need to power a garbage disposal in the sink and makes an organic soil booster for the garden. I also used Freecycle to give away our moving boxes and some extra building materials. Thanks to Freecycle, whatever we didn't need was used by someone else—including the former deck stairs and extra lumber from the deck, which prevented scrap from going into the landfill.

Next Matthew got busy on the glamorous part of conservation, changing a leaky float valve in the toilet and cutting the water used per flush in half by inserting several bricks and a milk jug filled with water into the toilet tanks. He also changed the showerhead to a low-flow model (purchased at the hardware store for about \$5), turned the water heater to its lowest setting, and then put insulation on the accessible basement piping. The insulation looks like black foam tubing and slips around the pipes quite easily. These toilet and shower projects only took a couple of hours and will save both energy and water for years to come.

The old single-pane aluminum windows in the house were a huge area of thermal gain and loss. We could not afford to replace them right away, but I greatly improved their efficiency by making heavy, lined drapes for all the windows. The attic only had 3 inches of insulation, so we increased it to R-60. (The higher the R-value, the more effective the insulation is in keeping a house warm in winter and cool in summer.) Matthew and Clark put soffit and ridge vents in to allow adequate airflow in the attic.

For the past six months, our electric bill has ranged from a high of \$18 to a low of \$13. The gas and water bills are similarly modest, thanks to these types of small changes throughout the house.

The kids and I planted apple, pear, peach, and cherry trees in our yard and started a vegetable garden on the south side of the house. The garden is prospering, thanks to a load of old manure from a neighbor's organic farm.

We fit a bicycle with a carrier made from an old milk crate, which makes it safe and convenient for us to cart groceries without using the car. But the most important energy-saving decision

we made this year was the choice of our home's location. It is two blocks from our children's college, which has eliminated the need to fly them home for school breaks. We also chose a home that allows us to walk to the store, the bank, and work, which means far less time commuting and more time for family and ministry.

In our three decades together, one of the things Matthew and I have learned is that our home is about a whole lot more than Matthew and me. It is about our children, our calling, the example we set, and the legacy we leave.

IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM

Washing machine

Energy-efficient washing machines use about one-third less electricity than conventional washers. We have an energy-efficient front-load washer, which not only saves electricity and water, but also spins out most of the moisture, so clothes dry much more quickly. I use the coldest water setting that gets the job done, and I only run full loads. Be frugal with detergent (use no more than the recommended amount), and don't wash items such as pants, skirts, dresses, and sweaters every time you wear them—they'll last longer and you'll save time, water, and energy.

GO GREEN

About 80 to 85 percent of the energy used to wash clothes goes toward heating the water.

Dryer

When we first went green, I resisted hanging our clothes on the line. We were living in a postcard-picture-perfect town on the coast of Maine, and no one in my upscale neighborhood used a clothesline. Besides, I didn't want the towels or my jeans to feel stiff. Spoiled me—as if Jesus (or my grandmother) had needed a clothes dryer. Talk about confusing a want with a need!

Matthew led by example, stringing a line in the backyard despite

my objections. It didn't take long for me to start feeling bad about my already hardworking husband doing all the laundry—so I joined



Ten Great Investments in Your Children's Future

When Joseph was asked to interpret the pharaoh's dream about seven fat cows devouring seven lean cows, and seven plump stalks of grain consuming seven scrawny stalks, he explained that a severe drought was coming. He urged the pharaoh to assess a 20 percent tithe to prepare for the seven lean years ahead.

Today, many financial, spiritual, and political forecasters are warning of some pretty dire times ahead if we continue business as usual. We still have time and the infrastructure to invest in long-term energy-saving technologies before energy costs ramp up (just take a look at your recent heating and electric bills) and the social disruption that will result from increasingly severe resource scarcities. Here are ten suggestions for long-term investments you can make today to prepare for the future, in approximate order of cost from low to high:

- Green power from your public utility
- Efficient home electronics—laptops instead of desktops, Energy Star printers, TVs, DVD players
- Energy-saving appliances—dishwasher, refrigerator, front-load washer, efficient dryer with moisture sensor
- Insulation in the attic, exterior walls, basement, and crawl spaces
- High-efficiency furnace, air conditioner, or heat pump
- Solar water heater
- Double-pane windows with low-e (low-emissivity) coatings
- Geothermal heating and cooling
- Hybrid car
- Solar panels

What's the best way to be prepared for energy shortages? Move to a smaller, Energy Star home (townhouses and condos are most efficient) within walking or biking distance of work, school, and shopping.

in. And then the kids started helping. And we realized it's not such a hardship after all to go outside a few times a week and listen to the birds while hanging clothes on the line. Now I look forward to hanging clothes, a welcome break away from my desk and a time to enjoy the beauty of God's creation in my own backyard.

Dryers are one of the most energy-intensive appliances. We've intentionally lived without one for more than six years now. In summer, we dry our clothes outside on the line. In winter, we use a line strung in the basement—it saves us from using a humidifier, too, because the damp clothes add moisture to the dry air.

If you do use a clothes dryer, make sure you purchase one with a moisture sensor, which allows the dryer to automatically turn itself off when the clothes reach a specified level of dryness. Always run full loads and keep the lint filter clean. Switch your dryer off when the load is finished since the dryer still uses power while on standby.

Dry cleaning

I try to avoid purchasing any clothes that must be dry-cleaned. Dry cleaning with perchloroethylene, or “perc,” is associated with environmental and health risks. I've found that many clothes can be



Laundry Hints

INSTEAD OF

DO THIS

Putting stained clothes in the hamper

Wash out spills right away. Never iron stained clothes—heat sets the stains.

Washing clothes to remove lint

Use a lint brush.

Washing lightly worn clothes

Hang them up immediately and let them air out for a day before returning them to the closet.

Pressing suits

Hang in the bathroom while you shower to remove wrinkles.

Dry cleaning

Wash gently by hand and then dry flat. (Use discretion! Delicate fabrics and most suits still need to be dry-cleaned.)

hand washed, even when the labels say dry-clean only. And alternative professional cleaners are becoming available, including wet cleaning, liquid carbon dioxide, and Green Earth methods. The only item I recall dry cleaning in the last five years is Matthew's sports jacket (once!), which he wears constantly for business trips.

Ironing

I don't do nearly as much ironing as I used to—hanging clothes on the line takes care of most of the wrinkles. When I do iron, I begin by ironing fabrics that require the least high temperature—so I can use the iron before it reaches peak heat. Then I turn the iron off shortly before finishing and iron the last couple of items on residual heat.

GO GREEN

Every American creates 4.5 pounds of trash per person, per day. Over the course of a lifetime, that adds up to 90,000 pounds of garbage for every one of us.

TRASH AND RECYCLING

Reducing

The best way to cut down on trash is to get everyone in the family to reduce what they bring into the home. When comparing products, consider how much packaging the item comes in. I try to avoid individually wrapped items. Instead, I buy in bulk, refill, and choose concentrated versions. I also avoid anything with “disposable” or “single use” on the packaging. Emma and I pre-cycle at the grocery store by checking to see if a certain container can be recycled before we bring it home. Matthew has taught us to look for quality, take care of what we buy, and repair what we have. And Clark is the least materialistic person I know—almost Spartan in his commitment to not owning more than he needs.

Here's one of the best money, time, and energy-saving tips in the whole book: Try going on a spending fast one week out of every month. Only buy food and bare essentials, such as medicines—*nothing* else. You'll save money and time, and you'll greatly reduce the waste you produce.

Reusing

My family gets a kick out of seeing how many times we can reuse items before throwing them away. Shipping boxes, padded envelopes, birthday candles, gift bags, and cards all can be reused several times. Worn-out clothing can be turned into quilts and pillows. Magazines and catalogs make great wrapping paper or even origami paper—our daughter, Emma, folded one thousand paper cranes from discarded catalogs with the help of a few friends and a paper cutter.

Because Emma loves to create art projects, my mother always kept a box of “treasures” for Emma's visits—scraps of material, ribbon, buttons, broken jewelry, pretty cards, and unusual stamps—more hours of fun than any trip to the toy store could have provided.

One of the reasons Americans throw so much stuff away is that very few of us live in true community with our neighbors. Talk to your neighbors, and find out what people around you need. Yard sales, <http://www.craigslist.org>, <http://www.eBay.com>, and



The Art of Receiving

Our son, Clark, was getting ready to set up his first apartment, so I put the word out to our neighbors that he would welcome basic kitchen supplies. A few days later, we found several boxes in our carport filled with plates, glasses, cooking utensils, pots, and pans—everything needed to set up a medical student's kitchen, including the exact model of toaster oven we bought when he was a baby (and still use). Most of the items came from a friend whose elderly mother recently had passed away. How grateful we are to save not only the expense of setting up Clark's kitchen but also the cost to the planet of manufacturing, shipping, and marketing new goods.

<http://www.freecycle.org> are great ways to make sure your stuff gets a second life.

Recycling

Learn about the recycling program in your area, and recycle everything possible. Check the bottom of plastic bottles and food containers for the little recycling symbol. Inside that triangle, you will find a number 1–7, which tells what type of plastic the container is. Some recycling centers accept plastics 1–7; others only accept numbers 1 and 2.

If you live somewhere that only accepts plastics 1 and 2, pay attention to those numbers in the store, and try not to purchase items labeled with a higher number. Seek out items made from recycled materials—visit <http://www.amazingrecycled.com> for inspiration.

Peer Pressure

What man is wise enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by the Lord and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross?

—JEREMIAH 9:12

Wednesday is recycling day. We only have curbside pickup every other week, so getting our blue barrel out before the truck comes at 8 a.m. is a big deal.

This morning Matthew and I walked across town. (Don't be impressed. It's a small town.) Block upon block, we saw nary a bin. And then we'd pass a cul-de-sac where every household had their recyclables ready for pickup—hallelujah! And then a wasteland again, and then a block chock-full of the blue bins.

I asked Matthew what he thought caused this phenomenon—some blocks unanimously recycling, some blocks not at all. His answer was simple: peer pressure.

My husband is a pretty smart guy, and I think his assessment is right on. Peer pressure can be a force for good or for bad. In this case, it is clearly a force for good.

A friend once told me that Matthew and I had “revolutionized” our neighborhood, simply by remembering to put our recyclables out the night before. When people went out to walk the dog or leave for work, they were reminded it was *the* day to roll out the cart. And once three or four families started regularly recycling, the rest joined in.

I remember one Tuesday evening when we came home from a speaking tour. It was late—about 11 p.m. Was tomorrow the day the town picked up recycling? I walked down the street to investigate. No blue bins. Then I walked around the corner. No blue bins. Then I made another right—and saw one bin! One bin in the moonlight was enough to motivate me to gather the cardboard and cans and plastics and glass and haul them out to our curb.

The next morning I slept in a little later than usual. But when I looked outside a few minutes before eight, the whole street was lined with blue bins. The moral of the story: even one blue bin can start a revolution! Be the first to put in a vegetable garden or hang a clothesline. Carry a bag and pick up trash whenever you go on a walk. In time, others will join in. A little peer pressure can be a very good thing.

Plastic

There are two main problems with plastic. First, most plastics are made from a nonrenewable (petroleum) source, and second, they take a very, very long time to break down. It’s hard to eliminate plastic from your life, but you can cut back by refusing plastic bags, buying items packaged in glass, avoiding bottled water, and steering away from anything that comes in a lot of plastic packaging.

Is it worth recycling plastic? Yes! The energy saved from recycling just one plastic bottle can run a 60-watt lightbulb for six hours. As petroleum grows scarcer and economic times grow harder, more and more new goods are being made from recycled plastics. Other good news: some grocery items are now packaged in plastics made from cornstarch and other plant materials that are biodegradable.

About 80 percent of our plastic waste ends up in landfills—including 60 million plastic water bottles a day.

Glass

Recycling one glass bottle can conserve enough energy to run a 100-watt lightbulb for four hours. Some municipalities require that you sort glass by color. Remember to remove the lids—they can go in with steel cans.

Americans are by far the biggest paper users in the world, consuming more than 400 pounds of paper per person, per year.

Paper

Matthew was the one who got me in the habit of using cloth napkins and handkerchiefs, but it wasn't until a few years ago that I realized I didn't need to fold all the handkerchiefs. What a liberating "Aha" moment! Now we just toss our clean handkerchiefs in a drawer.

When we do buy paper products, we make sure they are made from recycled paper. We try to use both sides of office paper, or we cut up paper used on just one side for scrap paper. Other paper-saving hints: Only print pages that you really need. Use newspaper to wrap presents—better yet, share a newspaper with your neighbor, read it at the library, or catch the headlines electronically. Used paper towels and coffee filters can be added to your compost.

A Not-So-Dirty Secret

When our children were born, Matthew insisted on using cloth diapers. I fussed at first—none of my friends were using cloth diapers—but once we got a system going, rinsing them out in the toilet and washing them was really no big deal.

Here's how we made using cloth diapers simple and convenient. We borrowed and purchased an ample supply of diaper covers in several sizes with adjustable Velcro. When diapering, we folded a cloth diaper in thirds vertically and put it in the diaper cover. Then we placed a thin disposable diaper liner on top of the cloth diaper, so it would be next to the baby's skin. Finally, we laid the baby on the prepared diaper, fastened the Velcro on the sides, and off we'd go.

When it came time to change the diapers, solids were deposited in the toilet along with the diaper liner, cloth diapers went in a drywall bucket filled with water next to the toilet, and covers went into the laundry basket. Every couple of days, we did a load of diapers.

The average family spends about \$1,000 per year on disposable diapers or about \$3,000 per baby. We invested \$1,000 total for two kids, including laundry costs. The diapers themselves made great dusting rags for many years, and we were able to give away our diaper covers to new families when we were done.

Bonus: earlier toilet training. Let's face it—a wet cloth diaper is more cumbersome to a toddler than a paper diaper. Emma was out of diapers by eighteen months—before she could even talk. At first we had to rush after her when we heard her little feet pitter-patter toward the bathroom—afraid that she would climb up on the toilet and fall in! In the end, cloth diapers saved us both time and money—as well as hundreds of God's beloved trees.

Metal

Most towns collect aluminum and steel metals. Aluminum (soda cans) is one of the most efficient and energy-saving forms of recycling; it takes only 4 percent of the energy to make a can from recycled aluminum as it would from virgin aluminum. If you want to hold a fundraiser, collect aluminum cans—recyclers will pay about a penny a can. Today, aluminum recycling saves about 11.5 *billion* kWh of energy—enough electricity to light a city the size of Cincinnati for six years. Many towns will recycle aluminum foil as well as cans. One little-known benefit of recycling aluminum is that it

reduces the need for bauxite mining. Obtaining this aluminum ore causes extensive pollution, often in poor tropical countries that can ill afford to clean it up.

At home you should recycle all of your soup, dog food, coffee, and whipping cream cans—nearly all metal food containers except beverage cans are made of steel.



Garbage In, Garbage Out

It was a life-changing revelation for me when I realized there is no “away.” Everything we use goes somewhere; everything we manufacture has a by-product. In the end, we (and all of God’s creatures) ingest the 4 billion pounds of industry toxins produced each year, either through the air we breathe or the food we eat. How can you help?

INSTEAD OF

DO THIS

| | |
|--|--|
| Individually packaged items | Buy in bulk |
| One-time use or disposable products | Purchase refillable and reusable items |
| Buying new | Take care of the old and repair when broken |
| Buying stuff you don't really need | Go on a spending fast |
| Throwing away usable items | Donate on http://www.freecycle.org or sell on http://www.craigslist.org |
| Buying craft paper or scrapbook supplies | Cut up catalogs and magazines |
| Going to the toy store | Visit yard sales and keep a treasure box |
| Accepting plastic bags at the store | Bring fabric bags |
| Buying bottled water | Drink tap water |
| Purchasing paper plates | Use washable dishes |
| Buying paper napkins, paper towels, and tissue | Invest in cloth napkins, cloth towels, and handkerchiefs |
| Tossing plastic and glass bottles in the trash | Remove lids, and then recycle |
| Throwing food scraps in the trash | Compost |
| Purchasing your own newspaper and magazines | Share with a neighbor, read at the library, or catch headlines electronically |

IN THE BASEMENT AND ATTIC

Furnace

If your furnace or boiler is more than twenty years old, replacing it with a high-efficiency model will prove a good investment. Old models have an efficiency rating of about 65 percent; new models can be more than 90 percent efficient.

Replace your furnace filter every three months; if the filter is clogged with dust, your air-conditioning or heating system can't "breathe" and won't run as efficiently. When you buy a new filter, select a pleated model that will filter the smallest particles—dust mites and allergens. It may cost a little more, but it will help keep both you and your furnace healthier in the long run. To save trips, Matthew writes down the size of the filter before he heads to the hardware store and buys about half a dozen filters at a time. Some filters can even be washed and reused.



Getting Real: Heating System Maintenance

Regular maintenance can have a big effect on fuel bills!

- Clean all registers.
- Replace your furnace filters every three months.
- Keep baseboards and radiators clean and unrestricted by furniture, carpets, or drapes.
- Tune up your system. Oil-fired systems should be tuned up and cleaned every year, gas-fired systems every two years, and heat pumps every two or three years. Regular tune-ups not only cut heating costs, but they also increase the lifetime of the system, reduce breakdowns and repair costs, and cut the amount of carbon monoxide, smoke, and other pollutants pumped into the atmosphere by fossil-fueled systems.
- Seal your ducts. In homes heated with forced-air heating, ducts should be inspected and sealed to ensure adequate airflow. Ducts can leak as much as 15 to 20 percent of the air passing through them. Insulating ducts can save as much as 20 percent on heating and cooling bills.

Water heater

Many water heaters are set around 160 to 180°F. Especially in milder weather, you don't need to keep the water that hot. We set our water heater manually to 120°F, reducing fuel consumption significantly. The thermostat control is usually located in a metal box connected to the water heater. Check your owners' manual if you can't locate yours.



Heating and cooling (including water) account for about 56 percent of the energy used in a typical household.

If your water heater is hot to the touch or over ten years old, consider a water heater blanket or jacket. A water heater jacket costs about \$20 and saves \$34 per year for gas heaters and \$54 per year for electric. Choose one that is at least three inches thick. You might also want to consider alternatives like tankless, solar, and on-demand heaters. Tax credits can help defray initial costs.

Also be sure to insulate your hot water pipes. The insulation only took us minutes to install at our house—it just clips on—and is inexpensive.



If your water heater is not insulated, about three-quarters of the energy used is wasted. Not sure if your water heater needs to be insulated? If it's hot to the touch, you need a water heater jacket.

Insulation

Attic insulation is one of the easiest and most effective ways to reduce your energy usage. Most energy guides recommend at least 10 inches of insulation in the attic. The house we bought had only 3 inches so we upped that to 18 inches with a 3.5 R-value per inch.

If you are adding insulation yourself, be sure to wear protective clothing and a face mask. Or let the pros do it—a tax credit can offset some of the cost.

If your walls are hollow, consider having insulation blown in. Ask the insulator what size hole he will be making and discuss which method will involve the least noticeable repairs.

Air-conditioning

Matthew can't tolerate the heat, but we try doing without air-conditioning as long as possible in the summer, and we shut it down a few weeks early in the fall. We also keep heat out of the home by minimizing use of the stove and oven and by closing curtains during the day. Painting the outside masonry of the house a light color last year also has kept the house significantly cooler.

A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense. Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables.

PROVERBS 24:3-4, NLT

One of the simplest, no-cost energy savers is to set the thermostat three to five degrees higher than you usually keep it. If you have a basement, try using the fan-only option of your central air conditioner to bring up the cooler basement air. Change the thermostat gradually, and then stick with the new temperature for a week or two, even if it seems uncomfortable at first. It's amazing how quickly your body will adjust.

For those who live in a dry area, such as out West, consider a swamp (evaporative) cooler. These can only be used in areas with low natural humidity, but require much less energy than air conditioners.

Attic fans

A whole-house fan draws cool air into your home through the windows while forcing hot air out through your attic vents. Use after sundown when the outside temperature drops below eighty degrees and in the early morning to cool your house and help reduce your

air-conditioning use. Be sure you have proper ventilation in your attic by installing soffits (air vents).

Dehumidifiers and humidifiers

Much of the summer, we can get by with little air-conditioning as long as we use our much-less-energy-consuming dehumidifier. To limit your dehumidifier's energy consumption, remember to turn it off when it's not needed.

In cold months, we use some old-fashioned methods to increase the humidity, like hanging wet clothes on a clothes rack to dry. Try placing a pan of water on a radiator or woodstove. Leave the plug in while you shower and don't drain the tub for a few hours.

Stuff

Do you have things in your attic or basement that you haven't used for years? Could someone else put them to better use? Jesus tells us not to store up treasures here on earth, and yet the majority of most Americans' lives are spent accumulating, paying for, organizing, and caring for things. Schedule a yard sale, sell items on eBay, give furniture to young couples just starting out or refugees arriving from other countries, or donate things to charities—you are sure to feel lighter. We got rid of about half of our possessions, and still we are looking for new ways to lighten the load. The more we give away, the less that stuff keeps us from answering God's call.



Lighten the Load

The average person on eBay sells \$210 worth of stuff (<http://www.eBay.com>). You can also sell your wares locally at <http://www.craigslist.com>, which also saves on the energy costs of shipping and transport. For tips on making yard sales more profitable, visit <http://www.yardsalequeen.com>. Rather give away? I am a big fan of <http://www.freecycle.com>, which keeps 300 tons of materials out of landfills each day. Or you can clean out the attic by donating to your church's next yard sale or local charity thrift store.

IN THE GARAGE

Toys

Nearly all my children's toys were purchased at yard sales. The major exception is a wooden train set, which was a gift from grandparents that is now being used by another family in our church. Once upon a time, we had fleets of toy trucks and drawers of art supplies and beads, all bought for pennies on the dollar at local rummage sales. When our children outgrew them, we passed them along.

Even at yard sale prices, we tried to avoid flimsy toys that end up in landfills. When children outgrew items like sports equipment, we exchanged with neighbors.

Recreational items

Does everyone on your block need a canoe, or can you share one? What about other little-used items, like tents, backpacks, croquet sets, badminton nets, and bocce balls? At one time or another, we



The \$100 Green Shopping List That Keeps On Saving

- Ten fabric grocery bags (some stores offer four cents back per bag every time you shop)
- One water filter pitcher (so you drink more tap water)
- Two spray bottles for homemade cleaning solution
- Five CFL bulbs
- Two low-flow showerheads
- Ten handkerchiefs
- Two power strips with on/off switches
- One furnace filter

have borrowed or lent all of these items. Make sure your neighbors feel welcome to borrow from you, and when you borrow, return items in good shape.

Cars idling

Simple fact: an idling car gets zero miles to the gallon. Even when we lived in northern New England, we almost never needed to warm our car—the rare exception being when it was too encased in ice to clear the windshield and drive safely.

If every one of the 65 million garage owners in the United States let their cars idle five fewer minutes per day, the total savings would be enough for 10 million people to drive across the country—a savings of 845 million gallons of gas a year. With gas prices at an all-time high, maybe it's time to reconsider the need to warm up the car before work.

Security lighting

Instead of leaving security lights on all night, consider motion sensors. In our carport, we installed an inexpensive movement sensor so the light is only on when we need it. If you do need to leave a light on for security reasons, invest in an LED bulb. LED lights can be ordered online or purchased in some home improvement stores. They cost more, but use far less energy—much less than CFL bulbs. Try solar lights for walkways.

How to Save Money This Year

(Estimated savings are *beyond* any initial investment; actual savings will vary from family to family and region to region.)

| | |
|--|-------|
| Wash laundry in cold water | \$60 |
| Adjust thermostat by three degrees | \$200 |
| Turn lights and electronics off when leaving room | \$40 |
| Purchase smart power strips for computers, TV, and audio | \$100 |
| Install energy monitor | \$100 |
| Stop refrigerator gazing; turn to warmest setting | \$50 |
| Unplug second refrigerator | \$100 |
| Install two low-flow showerheads | \$130 |
| Don't run water while brushing teeth or shaving | \$70 |
| Stop buying disposable plates, cups, utensils | \$50 |
| Purchase recycled toilet paper in bulk | \$30 |
| Purchase used clothes instead of new | \$250 |
| Purchase yard sale toys instead of new | \$150 |
| Don't buy carryout coffee | \$250 |
| Drink tap water instead of bottled water | \$260 |
| Share newspaper with neighbor | \$260 |
| Close fireplace damper when not in use | \$100 |
| Recycle electronics, printer cartridges, etc. | \$25 |
| Insulate water heater | \$120 |
| Seal ducts | \$50 |
| Caulk windows and doors | \$100 |
| Wash by hand instead of dry cleaning | \$150 |
| Make some of your own nontoxic cleaning products | \$100 |
| Go on a spending fast one week/month | \$600 |

TOTAL

\$3,345*

*Suggested ways to steward your savings: Put one-third of it toward debt reduction, one-third toward charity, and one-third toward investments in additional energy savings.

... And Share It with Those in Need

What could you do with \$3,345 in savings?

- Plant 33,450 seedlings (great birthday and Christmas presents!) in environmentally devastated parts of Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, and the Sudan. Visit <http://www.edenprojects.org>.
- Sponsor nine villages for a year in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, or Tanzania. Village sponsorship helps people become self-sufficient, teaches families to overcome hunger, and replants degraded watersheds, allowing streams to flow anew. Visit <http://www.floresta.org/sav.htm>.
- Give fifty-five Earth Baskets through Heifer International. The Heifer Earth Basket is full of good things like seedlings and honey from bees that offer families a source of income, help replenish eroded land, and enhance the quality of the environment. Visit <http://www.heifer.org/site/apps/ka/ec/product.asp>.
- Provide 111 families with two weeks of emergency food, clean water, and supplies through Compassion International's disaster fund. Many of these disasters are caused or exacerbated by human deterioration of God's natural ecosystems. Visit <https://www.compassion.com/contribution/giving/disasterrelief.htm>.
- Give your church a green-up kit: purchase recycling containers, a compost bin, reusable dishes and mugs, a year's supply of 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper for bulletins, multiple copies of faith-based environmental books for the church library and small group study, a stock of fair-trade coffee, and trees for planting on church grounds or in the neighborhood. Or arrange for an energy audit with your facility manager and local utility, and offer to pay for weather stripping, energy-saving light-bulbs, a water heater blanket, and other energy-saving recommendations. Visit <http://www.theregenerationproject.org> for more ideas.



Putting Your Faith into Action

Dear heavenly Father, Creator, and Sustainer, give me the knowledge and will to honor you by using resources wisely in my home. Help me to preserve rather than destroy; teach me to conserve rather than waste. Remind me that everything I possess is on loan from you. Help me to create a God-centered home that I share freely with others. Strengthen my desire to become a better steward of your abundant blessings.

Lord, help me *today* to:

- forgo using one electronic device
- reduce my shower time by two minutes
- turn off the faucet while brushing my teeth and shaving
- turn my water heater down to 120 degrees
- turn my thermostat up three degrees (in summer) or down three degrees (in winter)
- turn off the lights, TV, radio, and stereo when I leave the room
- use cold water if I use the garbage disposal
- turn my refrigerator and freezer to the warmest setting
- run only full loads in the dishwasher
- flush one less time

Lord, help me *this week* to:

- read Psalms 23, 24, 104, 147, and 148
- find out if my public utility company offers a green power option, and sign up
- avoid using aluminum foil and plastic wrap
- change at least five lightbulbs in my home to CFL bulbs
- wash my clothes in the coolest water possible, and only run full loads
- donate a box of books to the library
- buy only “tree free” toilet paper, paper towels, and tissues made from recycled paper

- air-dry my laundry—if I use the dryer, use the moisture sensor option
- hand wash clothes instead of taking them to the dry cleaner
- pre-cycle by buying minimally packaged goods and choosing reusable over disposable
- cut back on the amount of junk mail I receive by registering at <https://www.dmachoice.org>

Lord, help me *this month* to:

- stock up on handkerchiefs, cloth shopping bags, and cloth napkins so I can kick the paper habit
- clean out my closets and donate clothes I have not worn in the past year
- install low-flow showerheads
- switch to green cleaning products
- clean or replace air filters throughout my house
- wrap my water heater in an insulating jacket if it is hot to the touch or more than ten years old
- caulk and weather-strip around my windows and doors to plug air leaks
- disconnect the ice maker in my freezer
- unplug the TV and stereo when not in use, or put them on a switch-controlled power strip

Lord, help me *this year* to:

- donate my old cell phone, computer, or printer to a good cause
- make or purchase insulated window treatments
- purchase only the most efficient Energy Star items when appliances and lighting fixtures need to be replaced
- ask my utility company to conduct an energy audit on my home, and follow up on their advice
- insulate my walls and ceilings to save up to 25 percent on my energy bill
- use the money I save to advance your Kingdom



Summing It Up

Getting Started

I have:

- conducted an energy audit
- replaced at least three lightbulbs
- turned off lights when leaving the room
- implemented at least one water-saving strategy
- adjusted my thermostat at least two degrees
- started recycling

On the Journey

I have:

- conducted an energy audit and made at least five energy-saving changes
- replaced at least seven lightbulbs
- put electronic devices on smart power strips
- implemented at least three water-saving strategies
- adjusted my thermostat at least four degrees or installed a programmable thermostat
- reduced my heating bill and electricity bill by 20 percent
- reduced my weekly trash production by 20 percent or more

Green Superstar

I have:

- conducted an energy audit and made at least ten changes
- replaced all my lightbulbs
- replaced at least one major appliance or made one long-term energy investment
- implemented at least five water-saving strategies
- reduced my heating bill and electricity bill by 40 percent
- reduced my weekly trash production by 40 percent or more

Energy Audit Work Sheet

Use your most recent electricity and fuel bills to estimate the following:

Annual kWh of electricity _____ x .06 _____
 Annual therms or ccf of natural gas _____ x .88 _____
 Annual gallons of #2 fuel oil _____ x 1.23 _____
 Annual gallons of propane _____ x .80 **or** _____
 Annual pounds of propane _____ x .19 _____
 Annual cords of wood _____ x 220 _____

Car 1: _____ divided by _____ x 1 _____
miles driven annually *mpg*

Car 2: _____ divided by _____ x 1 _____
miles driven annually *mpg*

Car 3: _____ divided by _____ x 1 _____
miles driven annually *mpg*

Diesel vehicle: _____ divided by _____ x 1.23 _____
miles driven annually *mpg*

Miles of airline travel _____ x .044 _____

Gallons of gasoline used annually
 for boats, mowers, snowmobiles,
 chain saws, ATVs, etc. _____ x 1 _____

Miles of bus travel _____ x .018 _____

Miles of train travel _____ x .013 _____

Total dollars spent annually
 (for goods, services, mortgage and
 car payments, tuition, travel, etc.,
 but not including contributions to charity) _____ x .03 _____

TOTAL GALLONS (in gasoline equivalents) _____

Goal for next year _____

How to get there:

Sample Energy Audit (Typical U.S. Family)

Use your most recent electricity and fuel bills to estimate the following:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| Annual kWh of electricity | <u>12,340</u> | x .06 | <u>740</u> |
| Annual therms or ccf of natural gas | | x .88 | |
| Annual gallons of #2 fuel oil | <u>800</u> | x 1.23 | <u>984</u> |
| Annual gallons of propane | <u>120</u> | x .80 <i>or</i> | |
| Annual pounds of propane | | x .19 | <u>96</u> |
| Annual cords of wood | | x 220 | |

Car 1: 18,120 divided by 24 x 1 = 755
miles driven annually *mpg*

Car 2: 10,000 divided by 30 x 1 = 333
miles driven annually *mpg*

Car 3: _____ divided by _____ x 1 = _____
miles driven annually *mpg*

Diesel vehicle: _____ divided by _____ x 1.23 = _____
miles driven annually *mpg*

Miles of airline travel 6,100 x .044 = 304

Gallons of gasoline used annually for boats, mowers, snowmobiles, chainsaws, ATVs, etc. 50 x 1 = 50

Miles of bus travel _____ x .018 = _____

Miles of train travel _____ x .013 = _____

Total dollars spent annually (for goods, services, mortgage and car payments, tuition, travel, etc., but not including contributions to charity) 48,500 x .03 = 1,455

TOTAL GALLONS (in gasoline equivalents) 4,717

Goal for next year 4,245

- How to get there:
- Change lightbulbs
 - Vacation close to home next year
 - Carpool to work
 - Hang laundry on a clothesline in the summer

The Energy Audit Work Sheet is from *Serve God, Save the Planet*, and is used by permission of Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont 05001.

Top Twenty Green Resources for Starting the Creation Care Journey

WEB SITES

<http://www.arocha.org>. Founded in 1983 in Portugal, A Rocha (“the rock”) is an international Christian environmental group that now works in eighteen countries on six continents. A Rocha focuses on conservation, research, and education—helping to create a more sustainable world, one community at a time. Get involved by connecting with others and starting your own A Rocha local community group.

<http://www.betterworldshopper.com>. Want to purchase environmentally responsible products, but don’t have time to do the research? Betterworldshopper.com does all the legwork for you. Ranking everything from cereal and cosmetics to fast food and gasoline, this site helps you use your buying power to make a difference.

<http://www.blessed-earth.org>. In response to God’s calling, Matthew and I started Blessed Earth, an educational nonprofit that inspires and equips faith communities to become better stewards of the earth. Through outreach to churches, campuses, and media, we build bridges that promote measurable environmental change and meaningful spiritual growth. Our Web site keeps you current with our family’s continuing journey and equips you with resources to create a more sustainable world—one community at a time.

<http://www.creationcare.org>. An environmental network that seeks to educate, inspire, and mobilize Christians to be faithful stewards of God’s creation. Full of resources for both individuals and congregations. Check out their quarterly *Creation Care* magazine—the best Christian environmental publication I’ve seen.

<http://www.thedailygreen.com>. Inspiration for what you can do *today* to start making the world a better place. Includes current news, a comprehensive list of links to environmental blogs, and feature stories. Stewarding the earth is a marathon, not a sprint; this site is a great place to recharge your batteries along the creation care journey.

<http://www.earthministry.org>. Churches interested in becoming better stewards should check out the Earth Ministry Web site and publications, including *Greening Congregations Handbook: Stories, Ideas, and Resources for Cultivating Creation Awareness and Care in Your Congregation*—a “toolbox” for fostering creation awareness and care in congregations. Earth Ministry has a greening congregation process to help develop an enduring, creation-honoring focus within all dimensions of congregational life.

<http://www.energystar.gov>. Home of the Energy Star Program, this unbiased site provides guidance for purchasing energy-saving appliances, including online calculators and specific usage by make and model. You will also find helpful information on federal tax credits, rebates, energy audits, and green building. Produced by the EPA and DOE.

<http://environment.about.com>. Looking for a one-stop site for keeping up with the latest environmental events and research? About.com provides current, in-depth environmental news and information on renewable energy, conservation, green living and design, health, legislation, and other environmental issues.

<http://www.thegreenguide.com>. Sponsored by the National Geographic Society, this online magazine is full of tips and tools for green living, product reviews, and environmental health news. Also check out their book *True Green: 100 Everyday Ways You Can Contribute to a Healthier Planet* (Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin, National Geographic Society, 2006).

<http://www.nccecojustice.org>. National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs. Believing that God calls us to be stewards of his creation, this organization seeks to make churches more environmentally friendly and help to protect God's creation for current and future generations. It places caring for the environment in the context of loving our global neighbors.

<http://theregenerationproject.org>. The Regeneration Project, an interfaith ministry devoted to deepening the connection between ecology and faith, is a great resource for congregations, with active chapters in twenty-eight states. Projects include the promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation.

<http://www.treehugger.com>. This site provides downloadable guides for going green in all aspects of life—from birth to burial. A great resource for families just starting on the journey as well as those who want practical information for digging deeper.

BOOKS

The Green Bible (Foreword by Desmond Tutu, Harper One, 2008). This green-letter edition includes over one thousand highlighted environmental verses, inspirational essays by creation care leaders, and a Green Bible Trail Guide for further study. It's the first environmentally friendly Bible printed with a linen cover, recycled paper, soy-based ink, and water-based coating.

It's Easy Being Green (Emma Sleeth, Zondervan, 2008). Written by a teen, for teens, this is a great read for any young person interested in making the world a better place. As Emma's mom (and former English teacher), of course I'm a wee bit biased, so here's what *Publishers Weekly* has to say about the book:

Sleeth, now an Asbury College student, is a precocious advocate for environmental issues. She wrote this book when she was just 15. (And, no, she wasn't homeschooled, if that's what you're wondering.) She shares her passion for Jesus and for saving the planet, in roughly that order. Although the book is clearly aimed at teen and young adult readers, Sleeth is skillful enough at sermon illustrations that her anecdotes about babysitting, high school cliques and Mom's homemade meals help illuminate her points for older readers as well. Pull-out boxes offer concrete suggestions for young Christians who want to go green, but aren't sure how to go about it. (3 March 2008, PW)

(For more tools, visit <http://www.itsezbeinggreen.org>.)

Saving God's Green Earth (Tri Robinson, Ampelon Publishing, 2006). This book describes how the Boise Vineyard Church rediscovered its responsibility to environmental stewardship. A very accessible model for churches embarking on the creation care journey. (Visit <http://www.letstendthegarden.org> for more information.)

Serve God, Save the Planet (Matthew Sleeth, Zondervan, 2007). The author has been my husband for twenty-seven years, so I'm prejudiced, yet I know of no other book that has changed hearts like this one. I've found it to be the single best tool for starting a creation care group at churches; the discussion questions in the back have engaged and motivated hundreds of Sunday school classes. Here's what author and advocate for the poor Shane Claiborne has to say:

Creation is groaning. And Matthew Sleeth has responded. Serve God, Save the Planet is not an alarmist call of despair, but a hopeful invitation to reimagine the way we live. Sleeth's words have the urgency of an ER crisis coupled with the deep faith that the church is ready to join God in healing a wounded world.

(Visit www.servegodsaveplanet.org for more tools.)

FILMS

Kilowatt Ours. Filmmaker Jeff Barrie offers hope as he turns the camera on himself and asks, "How can I make a difference?" to save both the environment and money too.

Planet Earth (11-Part BBC Series, 2007). You can't love what you don't know: the unparalleled cinematography in this series filmed over five years will give you a deeper appreciation for the amazing diversity and interdependent ecosystems that God the Creator has entrusted into our care. Considered by many to be the greatest nature/wildlife series ever produced, Planet Earth presents magnificent sights and sounds from pole to pole.

Renewal. This documentary by Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockefeller traces the rise in environmental activism among religious communities throughout America, including evangelical Christians, Muslims, Jews, Baptists, Buddhists, and others. All are striving to preserve what they see as God's creation, and all are increasingly working together as conscious stewards of the earth.

SERVICES

Energy audit from your local utility provider. The first step to reducing your energy costs! Call your utility provider today, and schedule a home energy audit (free or nominal fee). After inspecting your home, the auditor will provide a detailed list of inexpensive ways you can immediately start saving energy and money, as well as the costs and paybacks for long-term energy investments.

(For a comprehensive list of resources in all of the above-mentioned categories, visit <http://www.gogreenthebook.com>.)

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