

Caring For The Earth is Not an Option

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(Philippians 2:4–8 NRSV) Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. {5} Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, {6} who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, {7} but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, {8} he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.

Do a quick goodsearch and you will find page after page of websites and books and magazine articles with catchy titles like:

205 Ways to Save the Earth

20 Easy Ways You Can Help the Earth

Easy Ways to Protect our Planet

Simple Ways to Save the Earth

10 Ways to Save the Earth

20 Quick and Easy Ways to Save the Planet

Five Ways to Save the Earth

The 10 Easiest Ways to Green Your Home

365 Ways to Save the Earth

101 Ways to Heal the Earth

10 Painless ways to Save the Planet

21 Ways to Save the Earth and Make More Money

14 Easy Ways to Go Green

40 Easy Ways to Save the Planet

10 Simple Ways to Save the Earth

Help Save the Planet: Easy Ways to Make a Difference

50 Ways to Save the Earth

50 Simple Ways to Save the Earth and Get Rich Trying

Top Ten Ways to Green Up Your Sex Life

Innovative Ways to Save Planet Earth

101 Things Designers Can Do to Save the Earth

Five Weird and Wacky Ways to Save the Earth

Five Ways to Save the Earth

10 Ways to Save the Earth (& Money) in Under a Minute

I should have done this search first, because who would have known that saving the earth could be so easy and so quick!

Green has become hip.

Just a few years ago, the only people who were “green” were those crazies who lived on communes in California, or those granola eating wacko’s in the Pacific Northwest. Maybe we can include a few people from Vermont and New Hampshire as well.

But now, everyone wants to be green.

Every business is trying to say that they are being GREEN.

Green Conferences are offered all the time.

Universities are offering classes in environmentalism.

It is great.

BUT → I keep hearing the phrase that we are in the midst of a green revolution.

And there is no question, but that we are seeing a lot of buzz about being green out there.

But a “Green Revolution?”

Now I am not the smartest guy on the block

But is it possible to have a revolution in which no one gets hurt?

A revolution where everyone is a winner

Where nobody has to give up anything

A revolution that is easy

That doesn’t sound like a revolution to me – that sound more like a party!

The sad truth is – we are all about LOOKING green

In an amazing blog, by a woman in Toronto called Green As A Thistle she observed:

Raising awareness about global warming, enviro-friendly products and people doing green deeds is obviously a good thing – but does every magazine on the rack need to come out with a green issue? I'm starting to believe that there actually can be too much publicity when it comes to climate change, especially when it reaches the fashion world. . . . I just fear that as soon as all the magazines get these green issues out of the way, they'll feel like it's out of their system, over and done with, like any other passing trend.

Making symbolic gestures are great --- but often that is all that they are.

If all of the money that has been spent on the Live Earth concerts had instead gone into lobbying the US Congress for more generous and longer-term production and investment tax credits for renewable energy, and for other green legislation, the impact would have been much more meaningful.

But we all know – moving from symbolic gestures to serious and substantive changes is never easy.

In a Thanksgiving editorial in the Washington Post, Allegany Professor of Political Science and Environmental Science, Michael Maniates wrote:

Several best-sellers offer advice about what we must ask of ourselves and one another. Their titles suggest that we needn't break much of a sweat: "It's Easy Being Green," "The Lazy Environmentalist," or even "The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time."

Although each offers familiar advice ("reuse scrap paper before recycling" or "take shorter showers"), it's what's left unsaid by these books that's intriguing. Three assertions permeate the pages: (1) We should look for easy, cost-effective things to do in our private lives as consumers, since that's where we have the most power and control; these are the best things to do because (2) if we all do them the cumulative effect of these individual choices will be a safe planet; which is fortunate indeed because (3) we, by nature, aren't terribly interested in doing anything that isn't private, individualistic, cost-effective and, above all, easy.

This glorification of easy isn't limited to the newest environmental self-help books. The Web sites of the big U.S. environmental groups, the Environmental Protection Agency and even the American Association for the Advancement of Science offer markedly similar lists of actions that tell us we can change the world through our consumer choices, choices that are economic, simple, even stylish. Al Gore himself isn't immune. His recent Live Earth concert featured a who's-who lineup of celebrities who said that if we all do our little bit to recycle and conserve -- the simple things, mind you, because that's all we'll need (translation: that's all they think we'll go for) -- we can together rescue the world for our children and grandchildren.

Never has so little been asked of so many at such a critical moment.

The hard facts are these: If we sum up the easy, cost-effective, eco-efficiency measures we should all embrace, the best we get is a slowing of the growth of environmental damage. That's hardly enough: . . . Obsessing over recycling and installing a few special light bulbs won't cut it. We need to be looking at fundamental change in our energy, transportation and agricultural systems rather than technological tweaking on the margins, and this means changes and costs that our current and would-be leaders seem afraid to discuss. Which is a pity, since Americans are at their best when they're struggling together, and sometimes with one another, toward difficult goals. . . .

Surely we must do the easy things: They slow the damage and themselves become enabling symbols of empathy for future generations. But we cannot permit our leaders to sell us short. To stop at "easy" is to say that the best we can do is accept an uninspired politics of guilt around a parade of uncoordinated individual action. What of the power and exhilaration that comes from working with others toward bold possibilities for the future? What of present sacrifice for future gain?

The time for easy is over. We're grown-ups who understand the necessity of hard work and difficult choices. We're ready for frank talk about how we best confront -- in ways rewarding, confusing, creative and hard -- the planetary emergency before us.

There is no Staples Easy button for us to push and solve this problem. It is going to take all of us working together – not only doing all the things that are found in Green Living for Dummies but also motivating and prodding our leaders to make the legislative changes that are necessary to help stop this car from rocketing over the cliff.

So don't stop changing your light bulbs to CFL's (Compact Florescent), or turning the heat down in the winter and the AC off in the summer. Or just recycling all that you can or simply turning off the lights.

But also, engage your elected officials. Encourage them to allow green to happen. The town of Munster has built a beautiful new park on the site of the old landfill and it uses a number of energy efficient features, and it has been recognized for its eco-friendly design. But the town is not very willing to see green technology – such as windmills to generate clean power be used at this stage of the game.

In Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi, he reminds us that as followers of Jesus we must be concerned for others:

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

When it comes to the environment – it is going to take all of us – Christians and non-Christians working together to solve this problem.

But before we can solve it – we have got to get our heads out of the sand and recognize that there is a problem.

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

Rob Watson, an environmental consultant put it quite well when he noted:

It's not like we're on the titanic and we have to avoid the iceberg. *We've already hit the iceberg.* The water is rushing in down below. But some people just don't want to leave the dance floor; others don't want to give up on the buffet. But if we don't make the hard choices, nature will make them for us. Right now, that acute awareness of the true scale and speed of this problem remains confined largely to the expert scientific community, but soon enough it will be blindingly obvious to everyone.