

"The Big 5" - Ideas for Stewardship of God's Creation

There are 1,001 ways to care for creation and save energy, but it is crucial to make sure we are doing the things that have the greatest positive impact. Below are five of the most important personal lifestyle changes we can make towards better stewardship of the Earth. By doing them we will reduce our consumption and emissions by more than half (Union of Concerned Sc., RMI, EPA, Kilowatt Ours).

- 1.) **Drive less by taking the "One Mile Challenge"**. US drivers release on average 6-8 tons of CO₂ per year or 19.7 pounds of CO₂ per gallon. Studies show that 40-50% of car travel is between 1-2 miles, so bike or walk when a trip is less than a mile. Next time you move, locate yourself near the things you need. Flying less is also crucial. Air travel has nearly 3 times the increase of CO₂ to greenhouse gases as it is directly released into the stratosphere.
 - 2.) **Eat less meat**, especially grain fed beef. Meat diets require about 20 times the resources to create protein than vegetarian diets on average. Cattle are a major contributor to climate change through methane release. Grass fed and local meats are much more efficient.
 - 3.) **Buy locally grown foods** and when possible organic. On average our meals travel 1,500 miles to reach our plates. Grow a garden, buy at farmers markets.
 - 4.) **Conserve energy at home**. Amory Lovins at RMI says "our energy use is like trying to cut butter with a chain saw". On average the amount of leaks, cracks and unsealed air spaces in our homes is equal to a hole in a wall 3 feet by 3 feet.
 - A) *Do the free stuff*- Use less appliances, hang clothes on sunny days, turn off lights, computers, and appliances. Turn water heater down to 115 degrees, cook with lids on pots, clean south facing windows.
 - B) *Seal it*- Caulk and weatherize cracks and leaks in your home. Caulk bypass areas in attic and basement where wires and pipes enter, caulk windows and doors. Seal air leaks along foundation rim joist. Seal heating ducts with mastic.
 - C) *Insulate it*- Especially attic with minimum R-30. Insulate basement or crawl space especially rim joist. Insulate walls, outer wall switches, heating ducts, and hot water pipes. Insulate windows with bubble wrap.
 - D) *Buy Energy Star items and appliances*- Change all light bulbs from incandescent to compact fluorescent. Install a programmable thermostat. Install an efficient shower-head and reduce CO₂ by 1.5 tons and 17,000 gallons of water annually. If your fridge is older than seven years old get a new energy star rated one. Buy an efficient front load washer, they use 190kwhrs/yr compared to 500-900kwhrs/yr with old top loaders. They cost \$10-\$20/yr to operate. Install Energy Star windows and doors.
 - 5.) **Buy green power**. Contact your utility company to see if you can purchase green power for your energy. This usually adds \$15-25 per month on your energy bill, but gives you the satisfaction of using clean energy. If your utility company does not offer green power, buy green tags through www.nativeenergy.com. Switch to solar hot water, it is the most cost effective use of solar energy.
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