

## Ministry Essay

I felt this assignment was a bit odd for a ministry paper til I realized that we are really ministering to the earth ultimately, not only the people that inhabit it. Anyway, I believe that I am well versed in eco-friendly living and in a perfect world I see myself as living off the grid using biodegradable products and growing my own food. I chalk it up to the fact that I can't afford it mostly but the truth of the matter is I am not willing to make the sacrifice or effort. That is my confession. That being said I am not completely apathetic to my duty to leave a smaller footprint. We use the energy efficient bulbs in our fixtures, we live in an energy efficient house (SIPS panels), I do grow some of our food including local meat and milk, raise our own eggs, make our own yogurt and cheeses and grow much of our own veggies.

I have fallen into that trap of laziness that most Americans exist in. I use paper plates like crazy to save on cleaning dirty dishes. I use paper towels to save on washing dish rags. My sister who lives in Australia tells me that they don't have that luxury because there is a scarcity of trees over there and paper products are outrageously expensive.

I also use an abundance of plastic bags. I use sandwich, freezer and gallon sizes, as well as plastic shopping bags. Many times I will put something like bread in them for a short time and discard them even though they are clean. I do feel particularly guilty about that. Many times I think I could rinse them out and reuse them then I say "Nah," and throw them away. So, I have decided to write about plastic bags so that perhaps through the research of the large amount of resources used to produce them as well as the longevity of their existence in a landfill, I might modify my consumption of them.

The sandwich bag was invented in 1957 and was the first plastic bag to be introduced onto the market. They are made of a resin type of plastic material, usually polyethylene. Unfortunately, they require the use of petrol chemicals to create them. A car can travel 11 meters on the amount of oil and coal used to make one plastic bag! The term, white pollution, has been coined to describe the damage incurred from plastic bags to the environment. Generally, polyethylene bags will last forever by some estimates, while some experts say 1000 years if they are buried and if exposed to sunlight (UV) they flake away in a few decades. Any way you look at their degradation time it is a long time!

These statistics are painful to confront. So to reduce the amount of amount of bags I send to the landfill I will use reusable sandwich containers, I will focus more on making the effort to reuse the plastic I have and use the reusable shopping bags on a more consistent level (I carry them in my car but often forget to take them in the store). Also, I will work to recycle the plastic shopping bags I have.