

Homemade systems for creation care

Last winter my pastor Carl Kniss, gave an example in his sermon about going grocery shopping with homemade cloth bags, made by his daughter Katrina. He shared how he took these to the checkout to save on plastic bag consumption. That Sunday I found Katrina and asked if she could make some bags for me. Shortly thereafter, I trekked to the grocery store with my blue and multi-colored cloth bags. The clerk filled them; I helped by opening the bags; people in line behind me appeared tolerant.

Confession: I have only used these bags two or three times since February. There are several explanations (the main one being that the bags ended up in Bob's car), but all are excuses. The real reason is that I did not take the time to develop a system to support this effort.

I remember that I began to regularly recycle cans and jars only after putting a recycling container under the sink next to the trash. I began to compost vegetable matter only after putting a bucket next to the recycling container.

The underlying question is--do I care enough to create a system? Haphazard efforts can get us started, but without a system, often bring only short-lived change.

Here are four steps I need in order for me to implement a "cloth bag at the grocery store" system:

1. Find the bags and put them in the car.
2. In the parking lot, remind myself to take the bags into the store, believing opening the trunk to get them is worth the extra 30 seconds.
3. At the store resist the urge to feel embarrassed that I am causing others to wait in line a little longer.
4. At home, put the cloth bags back in the car again, believing the extra minute is worth the effort.

How many plastic bags will be saved in a week or a month or a year? On a big shopping trip, it's not hard to fill 15-20 plastic bags. If that happens twice a month, and I use them for other smaller purchases, I could save 500 bags a year.

Systems involve planning, action, consistency, and above all the belief that something matters. Small actions addressing creation care needs do accumulate, and in the end will make a difference. Especially if a lot of us do a lot of small things. 📌



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Reusable shopping bags, like these made by Katrina Kniss, help us use less plastic.