

COMMENT

'Reduce, reuse, recycle,' is nothing new

By Ted Brown
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A Ted Bit

This past weekend was Communion Sunday at Limehouse Presbyterian Church, a sacrament we observe four times a year.

In preparation, I picked up a loaf of un-sliced bread at the local supermarket, which is used as part of the Communion ceremony, when the minister breaks it in half, in reference to 'Christ's body being broken for us.'

As I picked up a loaf from the shelf, I noticed it was wrapped in a paper bag. I was reminded of when I was a kid, and how loaves of bread were packaged in paper bags decades ago.

I paid for the loaf, the cashier said 'Did you want a bag for that?' to which I said 'No, I'll take it in the bag it's in...'

First of all, I begrudge paying five cents for the bag simply out of principle—but also cuz I simply didn't need it.

Ordinarily, we'd take that plastic bag, and maybe carry out other items, like a case of bottled water, and a myriad of other food products, all packed in plastic throw-away containers. And they're all destined to end up in a landfill.

The bread is a simple example. When I was a kid, a loaf of bread came in a paper bag, not today's plastic ones that take forever to break down in the dump.

We took our Lone Ranger lunchboxes to school everyday, complete with a thermos bottle to keep our soup warm, and sandwiches that were wrapped in wax paper, or in a plastic sandwich container, which also found its way back home that night to be used for another day.

We were reuse/recycle enthusiasts, and didn't even realize it.

At the old Limehouse School, the Georgetown Dairy truck dropped off milk in individual glass bottles—not paper ones. And the glass ones were returned to the dairy, to be washed and sterilized, and ultimately reused, over and over.

Grocery bags were also made of brown paper, a material that breaks down quickly in a landfill. But it could also be used for all sorts of neat things for kids, like cutting out eye holes and making a

mask to play with, or to cut open and use for art work.

Every morning, when I got up to go to school, I'd smell the coffee percolator on the stove. We had no single serving coffee makers, creating a load of those plastic containers for an individual cup of coffee.

Nope, my mom would fill the coffee 'perc' with the eight cups of water, and after it was all gone, she'd dump out the coffee grounds into a 'wet garbage' container, which we'd compost, and make another pot of coffee.

We didn't have green bins— we didn't need them. Most people composted in the garden. Living on a farm, we'd take it to the barn, and it went out to the manure pile, which was spread on the fields in the spring— the ultimate composting scenario.

We hung our clothes out to dry on a clothesline in good weather (in my mom's day, she had no choice— she hung them outside all the time, since she didn't have a clothes dryer until my sisters and I were in school.)

Today, most students are encouraged to be more responsible about our planet, more aware of what we are doing with our trash.

That's a great thing, but it concerns me that we actually have to teach it in school. Their parents should already know, and teach their children.

Picking up that loaf of bread last week, wrapped in a paper bag, I suddenly realized we need to take a hard look at what we are doing to our planet.

Our earlier generations were much more responsible than we are today, yet we have a mess of garbage, which in turn is a threat to our society.

I do hope we eventually manage to get back to some semblance of those days, employing reusable bottles, packaging and biodegradable products.

Cuz if we don't, we might find ourselves in a heap of trouble.

Or more specifically, a heap of garbage.

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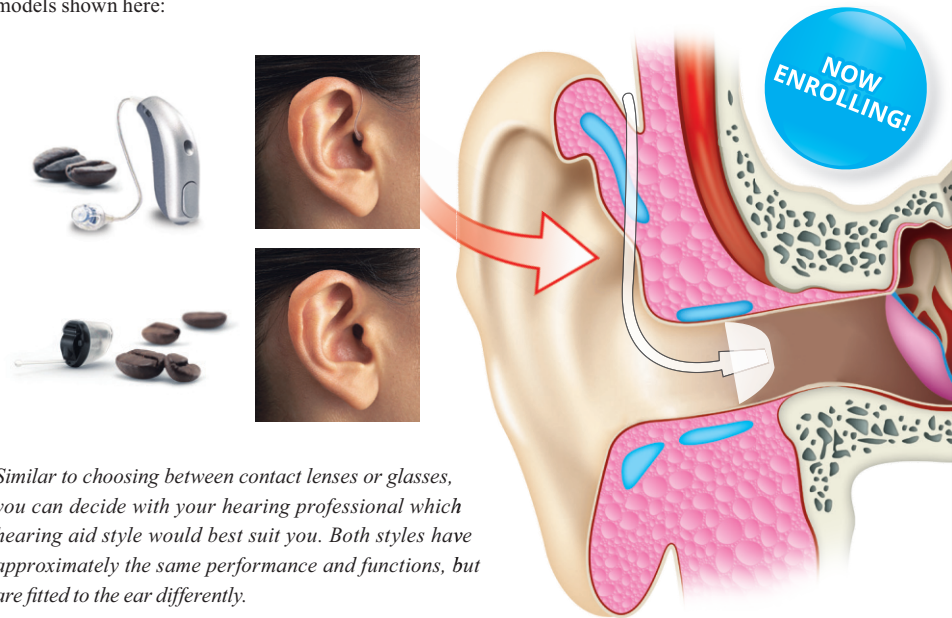
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