The Gift of Water

or

The life of a plastic disposable water bottle and why you should buy and/or give a loved one a reusable one

Every day we should give thanks for all that we have been given, including for one of the most precious gifts- fresh water. Let’s face it, without drinkable water humans cannot survive. But how we consume this vital resource has become a major problem for our beautiful planet. More and more of us now consume our water from plastic, single-use bottles rather than by glass out of the tap, filtered or not. This, on the one hand, may seem more economical, convenient and hygienic, especially with COVID happening, but have you ever stopped to think about where these bottles come from and where they go once you have finished with them? Ever done the math to see if it is indeed cheaper than an alternative like a washable, reusable water bottle filled from your tap? A couple of quick facts: In 2015 the US alone produced over 50 billion single-use disposable water bottles, but only 31% were recycled. The rest of them wound up in landfills, as ground litter or in the oceans (\*1). The average life expectancy of a single-use bottle is 500 years (some historical perspective: The Church of England broke from Rome in 1534, not even 500 years ago (\*5)) and on average, 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide are released into the environment every year during production (\*3). A single case of 24- 16.9 oz single-use bottles can cost $4 or more, or at least $0.10 per bottle compared to a reusable water bottle which can be purchased for as little as $9, used for years, making the per-use cost almost negligible (\*4) and it is made of recyclable material.

So, what is the life cycle of a water bottle you ask? Why should you care? Great questions. Let’s look at them together. So here is the science class version. Bear with me, it will be quick. Single use plastic water bottles are made predominately from oil. It takes approximately ¼ of a bottle’s worth of oil (about 4 oz.) and three times the amount of water in a bottle (about 50 oz) to create one 16.9 oz water bottle, i.e. it takes more water to produce than you consume. Now for the quick version of the life cycle process which goes basically like this: Plastic (PTE) created from oil are in the form of pellets that are then molded and shaped together to create the bottles. The bottles are then sterilized, filled with water, capped, and packed for shipping (which uses more plastic). Trucks deliver the bottles to stores, where they are sold to you. Then you take them home and drink them (\*2). Side note: At this point, in addition to the oil needed to make the bottle, please consider the fuel needed to transport them to stores, what you use to drive to and from the store and the environmental impact of the greenhouse gases being released.

Now this is the end of story, right? Not so fast. What do you do with the empty bottles? Hopefully, you return them to be recycled. If you do, kudos to you and you should feel good about doing this. For the bottles that are lucky enough to be recycled, the life cycle continues something like this (the quick version): Recycled bottles are sent to a special facility like one in Riverside, CA, where they are crushed, sorted, cleaned, and ground up into little pieces. Those pieces are sold to a manufacture who incorporates them into something new, like carpet, clothing, or packaging. In fact, PET plastic can be recycled many, many times into many different products we use every day. Unfortunately, this part of the life cycle is not the case for most bottles. People either do not recycle the bottles or it is cost prohibitive with little to no financial incentive for manufactures to go this route so they wind up in landfills. Bottom line, right now it is cheaper to produce from scratch than recycle. (\*3). For these unrecycled bottles, they become trash that become ground litter, are shipped to landfills, or find their way into our oceans (\*3).

So why should you care and what can you do? Our planet is a gift given to us by God. It is our obligation as Christians to be good stewards of this blessing. Switching to an alternative reusable, dishwasher safe, water bottle is easy and cost effective. There are literally hundreds of choices out there for you to find. Globally, by making this switch, you reduce plastic production, help divert the water used during production towards other needs like food crops and personal drinking water, and reduce destructive greenhouse emissions that pollute every aspect of life on Earth. Locally or personally, you save money that can be spent on more meaningful things like giving a reusable bottle to a loved one as a gift and decrease the volume of trash you produce that the town has to pay to remove. Want more incentive, check out the link to the Town of Branford and what it costs the town to take away the trash. Just think of what other good things the town could support if funds now needed for trash removal were diverted to something else because we are all reducing what we throughout, like plastic water bottles. All of this is good for you, your loved ones, congregational family community at large, and this beautiful planet. — Barbara Burt

Sources Footnotes:

\*1 The Atlantic, Dec 4, 2015 article [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)

\*2 Angel Water Inc, June 14, 2017 posting [www.anglewater.com](http://www.anglewater.com)

\*3 [www.Hydratem8.com](http://www.Hydratem8.com)

\*4 [www.walmart.com](http://www.walmart.com)

\*5 [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com)