

ink spots: *opinions, news, and reviews from an inkjet*

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Our world is hungry for genuinely changed people. Leo Tolstoy observed, “*Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself.*” Let us be among those who believe that the inner transformation of our lives is a goal worthy of our best effort. *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster.

Are vaccinations “supersafe,” necessary, dangerous, too numerous?

It would be interesting if there were a mechanism that could count the number of times I have used the word “change” in our *Let's Be Well* lessons and in newsletters. As I said last quarter, if you read our newsletters regularly, you'll find the same themes repeated. Scriptures use the word “change,” also. It's spelled “repent,” and that's more than a little out of fashion in our culture.

There are a few things I think I might change if we were rearing children now instead of in the 50s and 60s. One of them is addressed in “A Closer Look at Vaccines,” a five-page article in the February 2009 issue of *US NEWS*. Let's compare the various viewpoints as if they were traffic lights, green, red, and yellow.

Green. Writer Deborah Kotz, says, “Avoiding immunizations altogether certainly isn't a good solution for families, because meningococcal, pertussis, and other infections could sharply rise if vaccination rates drop low enough—putting any unvaccinated child at risk. Measles cases rose recently in counties with the lowest vaccination rates. So, parents who choose not to vaccinate had better hope that other parents are not following their lead.”

Red. Much of the article, however, features stories of parents who feel uneasy about having subjected their children to immunization. The lead story describes the experience of a woman who wanted to protect her 15-year-old daughter Sara

“from the human papillomavirus that had caused abnormal Pap smears in other family members” using the three-injection regimen of Gardasil. All three of Sara's shots were followed by “crushing [migraine] pain that became constant, causing Sara to miss school, quit the soccer team, and spend weekends in bed. Her mom now wonders if she made the right decision to vaccinate, even though the Food and Drug Administration insists there is no reason to be worried about Gardasil.”

Opinions are divided among those who say that there's no reason to be worried and others who believe that Gardasil's safety has not yet been proven, questioning why it is being recommended for girls as young as 9. “We're monitoring the HPV vaccine very carefully, and the only adverse event that causes some concern is *syncope* or fainting,” says Robert Ball, director of the FDA's office of biostatistics and epidemiology. But Pediatrician Catherine DeAngelis, editor in chief of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, says, “I certainly think it's wrong to give [Gardasil] to young teenage girls.” Karamah Hawash, the pediatric neurologist who treated Sara with prescription migraine medication, says she has seen “two other girls stricken by daily migraine after receiving Gardasil shots.”

“Such uncertainty explains the decibel level of the battle cries both defending and attacking vaccines, which has risen in

recent years, along with **the number of immunizations children face: 38 shots against 15 diseases before kindergarten**, compared with 11 shots against eight diseases 15 years ago.” The Centers for Disease Control believes that vaccines are lifesaving; “if every American child followed the recommended schedule, 33,000 lives could be saved, 14 million infections prevented, and \$10 billion slashed from the healthcare costs every year.” Many parents are unconvinced, “given other data—also from the CDC—showing that about 30,000 ‘adverse events’ are reported every year by doctors and patients, of which 3,000 to 4,500 are serious enough to cause hospitalization, life-threatening illnesses, or even death.” John Iskander, the CDC's associate director for immunization safety, insists that “vaccines are extraordinarily safe medical products,” but he acknowledges that deciding between risks and benefits can be difficult for parents.

Chapter 6 in *Health and Nutrition Secrets that Can Save Your Life*, by Russell Blaylock MD, addresses vaccines. Young families who need to make decisions about immunization would do well to read it, and do other research. I can share a copy of Robert F. Kennedy's article investigating what he called “the government cover-up: mercury/autism scandal.” I also printed the internet article by Bernadine Healy MD [\[brain-behavior/2008/04/10/fighting the autism war\]\(http://brain-behavior/2008/04/10/fighting-the-autism-war\) \[with 76 comments.\]](http://usnews.com/articles/health/</p>
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Yellow. The rest of the magazine article focuses on the autism controversy, noting that “the government is acknowledging that at the moment, **science doesn't know how many shots a kid can safely get at once and which children will be harmed.** Last March, the family of 9-year-old Hannah Poling won a claim in a federal Vaccine Court (created to protect manufacturers from ruinous lawsuits): the autism she developed as a toddler was most likely triggered by receiving five shots against nine diseases in one day. All told, the government has paid out more than \$900 million for vaccine injuries over the past two decades.”

There's a box suggesting how parents can protect their children. For example, **Space out shots.** Add additional office visits so that the child does not get vaccines against 8 different diseases at once, especially two vaccines with live viruses, such as the MMR and chickenpox vaccines. **Choose flu vaccines without thimerosal.** This mercury preservative was finally removed from kids vaccines but is still in the flu vaccine. Insist that your MD choose one without. **Be cautious about new vaccines,** and **Avoid shots if your child is sick.** Reactions can result “when an immune system already primed to fight an infection kicks into overdrive after a shot.” **Yellow= wait? +++**

The State of America's Health, a comprehensive report in a recent *US NEWS*

"Americans today are fatter and less active than ever before. Two-thirds of adults are either overweight or obese, and fewer than a third exercise at least three times a week. Twenty-four million people have diabetes, the vast majority of it related to lifestyle, and an additional 57 million are pre-diabetic. Despite decades of public anti-tobacco campaigns, 1 in 5 adults smokes...."

"The news isn't all bad, though... The death rate for heart disease, the No. 1 killer, has declined by 26% since 1999. Both the incidence and death rate for cancer, the second most common killer, are in decline for the first time... [But] every year an estimated 900,000 people die from avoidable causes: because they failed to maintain a healthy weight, eat nutritiously, and exercise... That's roughly 40% of all US deaths. "

"The State of America's Health," Michelle Andrews, cover story, *US NEWS & WORLD REPORT*, February, 2009.

On this page, I usually review a book. In this issue, I want to excerpt a few of the stories in the February 2009 issue of *US NEWS & WORLD REPORT*.

A healthy start. "Our expanding girth is America's most visible health problem. Not only are adults too heavy, but obesity rates for children have more than doubled in the past 30 years." Not coincidentally, from 2002 to 2005, kids' prescriptions for diabetes drugs rose 100%.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau said in the 18th century that children should not be considered miniature adults. Doctors have generally agreed—until now. Today's kids are developing adult health problems: aging arteries, pre-diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and high cholesterol. Actually, it's childhood obesity that is the root of the problem, with about 18% of children now clinically obese, compared with 5% in the 1970s. As with their parents, excess body weight often leads to kids having increased blood sugar levels, insulin resistance, and eventually "adult-onset" type 2 diabetes. Carl Lavie, medical director of cardiac rehabilitation and prevention at Ochsner Heart Institute in New Orleans, says, "It's scary to think that our kids may not live as long as we do."

Drugs deal with symptoms rather than causes. Some experts are working with parents to see that kids get an hour of outdoor play and also change their eating habits, substituting water for juices and soft drinks. Parents need to provide kids with a variety of fruits, vegetables, and daily servings of meat or beans. Pediatrician Lawrence Rosen teaches patients who overeat to find other ways to deal with stress, taking a daily bike

ride, practicing prayer or meditation, playing their favorite music, or finding a kid-friendly yoga or exercise class. It is important to find "the right strategy [that] may yield lifesaving payoffs for kids who have the beginnings of diabetes or vascular disease," says Lavie. To find out what to do next if you are "flirting with diabetes", visit health.usnews.com/diabetes, where you will also find recipes.

Younger than your years.

If you qualify for the heading "Boomers and Beyond," you may want to check out this magazine. It covers more categories than I will be able to address in a column and a half, such as peripheral artery disease, brain decline, osteoporosis, urinary issues, muscle loss and frailty, osteoarthritis, hearing loss, colon cancer, loss of vision, wrinkles, and varicose veins.

That litany itself would be depressing, except that the article begins, "**How well you age is largely in your hands: Research shows that making lifestyle changes even in the middle years can help turn back the clock.**" Each of the sections has suggestions. "While there's no stopping time, there's plenty that you can do to foil the aging process."

"Your chronological age doesn't necessarily correlate with how old your body thinks it is," says Michael Roizen, chair of Cleveland Clinic's Wellness Institute and co-author of *YOU: Staying Young*. "There are about 191 things that go into calculating your real age, and **149 of those are within your control to change.**" Suggestions include quitting smoking, cultivating a strong social network, getting regular exercise, using only healthy fats, and eating foods high in antioxidants.

Dean Ornish, professor of medicine at the University of California-San Francisco, whose work I have followed for years, worked with a group of men with prostate cancer. He learned that a low-fat diet, regular exercise, and relaxation techniques work synergistically to increase levels of *telomerase*, an enzyme thought to show cellular aging and prevent healthy cells from turning cancerous. "Telomerase turns up those genes associated with disease prevention and turns down the genes associated with heart disease, diabetes, and cancer," says Ornish. He found that telomerase was boosted by 30% in prostate cancer patients who followed **a plant-based, whole grain diet with very little fat or sugar**. The men also took fish oil supplements, exercised 30 minutes a day, and practiced yoga or meditation, for an hour a day.

If you need an ounce of prevention rather than a pound of cure, you are encouraged to consume more fruits and vegetables, and do only a few minutes of meditation. Those truly dedicated to living longer may want to consider "hunger-pang-producing calorie restriction," which may help people live about 20% longer, says David Sinclair, professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School. A chemical called *resveratrol* offers the same benefits, at least in mice, but people would need to drink 100 to 1,000 bottles of red wine a day to get enough. The article says it is questionable whether an over-the-counter supplement, which already exists, contains enough of the nutrient.

But lowering blood sugar levels through exercise and diet changes could also help maintain your memory. **Now that's good news.** +++

Have you considered that everything you eat needs an exit strategy?

Nutrition Action Newsletter has a new seal in the lower right hand corner, which says, **World's largest-circulation newsletter, 35 years, 1974-2009.** I haven't been reading it that long, but I think it is not only the most trustworthy, but also the most humorous of all the health and nutrition magazines I read.

The entire March 2009 issue is focused on having "an exit strategy" for the three-plus meals we North Americans eat each day. The cover story, "How to Stay Regular," points out that constipation is usually not dangerous, but it can be "annoying, uncomfortable, and expensive. Every year we spend \$750 million on laxatives, and irregularity leads to up to 8 million trips to the doctor and some \$7 million for evaluation and diagnostic testing." Too bad we cannot resolve our problems of how to get things moving on our own and donate the monetary difference to our grandchildren's share of the economic stimulus plan.

Experts define constipation as no more than two successful bathroom visits per week. The article calls that "the simplest—and mercifully non-descriptive—definition." No self-respecting alum of our *Let's Be Well* classes would settle for two bathroom events a week. We teach that having one for each meal consumed is very important for maintaining a healthy body. Following, I quote some of the Q&A from the article, with questions being answered by Joanne Slavin, professor in the department of science and nutrition at the University of Minnesota. Her lab conducts research on fiber, whole grains, and the phytochemicals in grains. She will serve on the Advisory Committee for the US government's 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Q. Why do women have more problems with regularity than men? **A.** *It's partly because the less people eat, the less food there is to move things through the digestive system. Women...tend to be on lower-calorie diets. I'm concerned that with the obesity epidemic and trying to get people to eat less, constipation is going to be more of a problem.*

Q. Do calories explain all of the gender difference? **A.** *No, ...in one study,...when men and women were fed the same amount of fiber, women had longer transit time—that is, it took longer for food to move through their digestive tracts....Hormones may affect transit time. Women report changes in laxation with menstrual cycle and pregnancy, so I don't think it's just calorie intake....*

Q. But the answer isn't simply to eat more calories, is it? **A.** *No, the answer is to get more of your calories from plant foods like whole grains, beans, vegetables, fruits, and nuts....[A] burger, a white bun, and a soft drink [will give you] plenty of calories, but very little fiber.*

Q. Do people get less regular as they get older? **A.** *Yes, but it's not clear why....Older people may become less regular because they eat less and they're less active. And older people are more likely to have Parkinson's disease or diabetes, both of which can cause constipation.*

Q. Does fiber have the biggest impact on regular-

ity? **A.** *Yes, but when processing disrupts the natural structure of plant foods, that also makes a difference. If you go back to the older studies, whole wheat bran was more effective in making stool than ground up wheat bran. The fiber content is the same, but it's more effective if the food is less processed. So, unprocessed food is key.*

Q. Do most Americans get far too little fiber? **A.** *Yes. The average intake is about half of what's recommended. That's especially true for men, because they have higher recommendations. You need 21 grams of fiber a day if you're a woman over 50, and 25 grams if you are 50 or under. If you are a man, you need 30 grams a day if you're over 50, and 38 grams if you're 50 or under.*

Q. Do people underestimate how much is enough? **A.** *Yes. The foods they think of as high-fiber aren't that high. They say "I had a salad and an apple today." Well, that's maybe 6 or 7 grams, max—much less than a day's worth. Unless you are eating whole grains, legumes, and bran, you're probably nowhere near the daily targets.*

Q. Bran. Beans. What else works? **A.** *Whole grains. And then the more fruits and vegetables people eat—any time, even canned or in soups. Soup is a way to get vegetables into people—a way to get people to eat real food. The more volume that goes in, the more fecal mass there is.*

Q. Even if the fruits and vegetables aren't high in fiber? **A.** *Right. In Africa people used to eat these not-so-digestible, bulky foods like plantains. They aren't that high in fiber, but there's some malabsorption of the carbohydrate, so it forms pretty big stools. Potatoes, bananas that aren't too ripe, wheat, and other grains—anything with resistant starch—is good for laxation.*

Q. It sounds like wheat bran is king. **A.** *Absolutely. And psyllium works. So do prunes, though they haven't been studied systematically. [In a small study], people reported that both prune juice and prunes increased laxation.*

Q. Are there some hidden causes of constipation? **A.** *Yes. Iron supplements are notorious for constipation. And many medications are considered constipating.*

There's more, but I am out of room. If you are not producing one stool for every meal you eat, make diet changes! If you need additional help, ask me for data sheets and samples of both AIM's flagship product, *Herbal Fiberblend®* and AIM's new *fit 'n fiber™*. Or, if you use the web, go to <http://www.youtube.com/aimusers> to watch AIM members tell their stories about *Herbal Fiberblend* and AIM's new *fit 'n fiber*, complementary sources of soluble and insoluble fiber that can total up to 22 grams of fiber a day. Each product has different goals. *Herbal Fiberblend* is an outstanding colon cleanser that scrubs the digestive system of mucus and parasites, so you can assimilate good nutrients, while pleasant-tasting *fit 'n fiber* is intended to reduce appetite and improve overall health. Fiber can also play a vital role in weight management. See page 6 in the January/February *Living Well*. +++

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Notable Quotables:

- **In Defense of Food: an Eater's Manifesto**, by Michael Pollan. "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." Most of the nutritional advice of the past 50 years [cut fats and eat more carbohydrates] has only made Americans fatter. Pollan's idea of food is what lines the periphery of the supermarket and is sold in its whole state, not the largely artificial foodstuffs on the shelves in between. "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food," he advises, or is incapable of rotting. [This sounds very much like what we have taught since 1994 in *Let's Be Well*.]
- **AntiCancer: A New Way of Life**, by David Servan-Schreiber MD, PhD. "All of us have cancer cells in our bodies. But not all of us will develop cancer," explains a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "The book describes his own battle with a brain tumor. Today he is healthy. His quest to enlist his body's natural cancer-fighting abilities, and his examination of what makes cancer cells thrive and what inhibits them, is meant to guide readers toward a new way of life." Certain foods—such as green tea, berries, dark chocolate, and mushrooms—as well as exercise, support the immune system. White flour, white sugar, and red meat do just the opposite. Avoiding environmental toxins, e.g., like those from Teflon pans and deodorants containing aluminum, are also mentioned as smart self-defense.
- **The Scientifically Proven System for Reversing Diabetes Without Drugs**, by Neal Barnard MD, shows that people with type 2 diabetes "can cut their blood sugar and increase insulin sensitivity through simple changes in their diets, thus eliminating or reducing the need for medication." The secret is to eat vegetables, fruit, beans, whole grains, raw foods, and avoid animal products, vegetable oils, and nuts.
- "Multivitamins don't work," headline, Health and Science page, *THE WEEK*, 27 February 09. New research says that "That daily multivitamin is a waste of money. In an enormous study involving more than 160,00 women over a period of eight years, researchers found that multivitamins do absolutely nothing to prevent cancer or heart disease or increase people's longevity...More than half of all Americans take multivitamins, spending more than \$20 billion a year on them. Researchers said that people would be better off eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains than popping pills," according to study author Marian Neuhouser, *The New York Times*.

Let's get back to basics: beans, whole grains, fruit, dark greens, even eggs

There's probably never been a time, during the lives of most of us, when it has been so important to make good food choices. Some people who have never gardened before are looking for areas to stake out a vegetable garden, or are considering putting in tomatoes instead of flowers. Here are some ideas for stretching your food dollar.

Try **precycling**. Add this new verb to your vocabulary. *Brandweek.com* says that precycling is the act by which consumers avoid products that

create more superfluous stuff. Shoppers who buy from the bulk foods section, especially if they bring their own bags, are committed to do more for the environment than throwing their cans and bottles in the right recycling bin.

Some ideas for buying in bulk: **beans** cost only 52 cents per 1/2 cup serving. You'll get 7 grams of fiber, about 1/4 of the daily recommendation, and 7 grams of protein. Once you buy **steel-cut oats** you'll never go back to instant oatmeal. A new

My mother's EVERLASTING BRAN MUFFINS

Pour 1 cup of boiling water over 2-½ tsp of baking soda. Set aside.

In a large bowl, cream together 1/2 cup butter, and 1 cup sugar. [Consider using part agave, barley malt, black strap molasses, honey, or your favorite **healthy** sugar-equivalent.]

Stir in soda/water. Add two beaten eggs, preferably from happy hens.

Add the following alternately with one pint of buttermilk. You can use reconstituted dry buttermilk, if you don't want fresh buttermilk left over.

2-½ cups unbleached flour [You may wish to use part whole wheat, ground flaxseed, and/or untoasted wheat germ.]

3½ cups all-bran cereal [Kellogg's is the only brand on the market now.] You may substitute part of that amount with raisin bran.

Add 1/2 cup or more broken nuts, such as walnuts or pecans, and

1 cup organic raisins. [Conventional grapes are heavily sprayed.] Mix well.

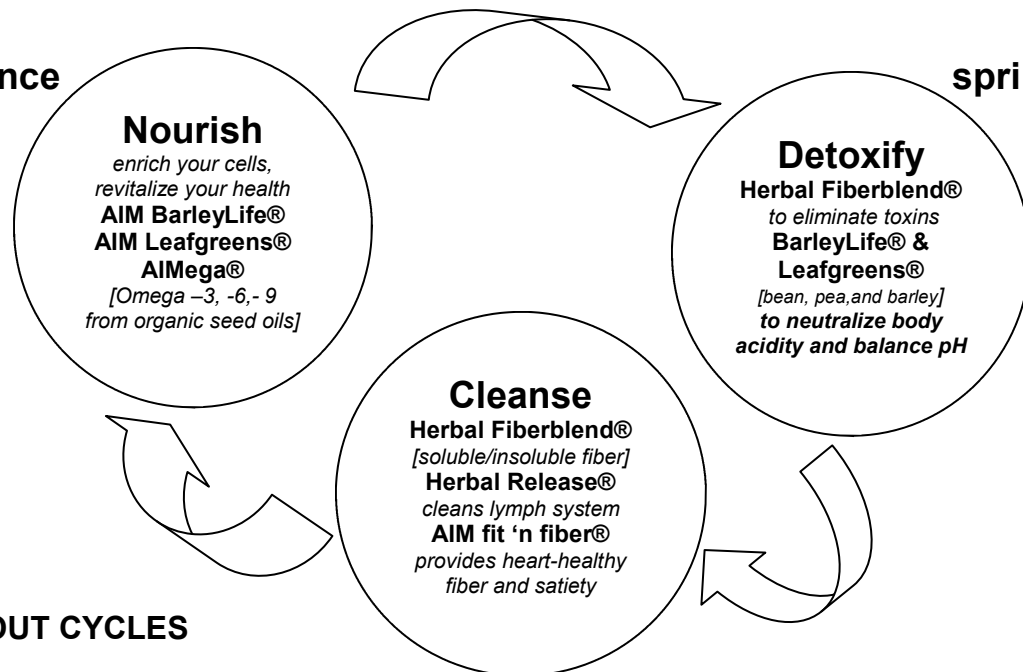
Refrigerate, covered, at least three hours before using. Batter will keep in a sealed Tupperware bowl (if you burp it occasionally) for up to six weeks.

Before baking, stir well. Drop by ample spoonfuls into greased or sprayed muffin cups. Bake at 375° for 25-30 minutes. Makes about 36.

[A LBW alum sent an e-mail requesting this recipe. I'd forgotten it. We are enjoying these again, and remembering my frugal mother, who taught us healthy eating.] ♥♥♥

rating system gives steel-cut oats a score of 60 and honey nut instant oatmeal a 28. It has a formula too complex to describe here, but basically favorable nutrients (eg, folate, fiber, calcium) are weighed against unfavorable ones (saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, salt). It also factors in the number of calories per serving. Whole wheat spaghetti earns a 91 and white spaghetti a 49, because the former has twice as much fiber, and also contains magnesium and zinc, only found in **whole grains**.

Those who consume fewer antioxidants are more likely to develop macular degeneration than people with higher levels. Protect your eyes with vitamin C (**citrus, kiwi, broccoli**), vitamin E (**healthy oils, nuts, avocados**), and lutein and zeaxanthin, which abound in **dark leafy greens**: spinach, kale, and collards. Forget the cholesterol myth. Eat a **whole egg** (23¢) as often as daily, for its protein, lutein, and zeaxanthin. Scramble them with **spinach** for more nutrients. Let's be well! +++



LET'S TALK ABOUT CYCLES

Have you ever been to a spa? I haven't. I also avoid the so-called makeovers in department stores, because of the fragrances. But I like the March/April *Living Well* magazine suggestion on page 13, because it begins, "**Life is said to be a circle. To maintain good health in life, a circle of activity needs to occur inside your body. Detoxify, cleanse, and nourish with AIM's quality products for year-round support of this healthy cycle.**"

You can choose from among the products in the cycle above to do your own inner body makeover, seasonally--or better yet, all year round. The seasons are, indeed, a good time to do cleanses, if you are not in the habit of detoxifying daily. If you have a juicer, get it out, buy several five-pound sacks of juicing carrots and juice for whatever number of days seems right for you. We use AIM's **Just Carrots** regularly. But seasonally we juice. We like a little apple, as well as something green, in our carrot juice to balance the inherent sweetness. That's also a good time to drink more pure water, with fresh lemon added, so that it's alive and alkaline. You may want to do some sort of fast—either an all-liquids fast, using the AIM products above, or a Daniel fast. Daniel avoided meat, wine, and pleasant foods for 21 days, which is an optimal time. Lasting changes can occur during that amount of time—remember, it takes 21 days to make a habit. Make one of your objectives changing bad habits to good ones, permanently. You may find helpful the chapter on fasting in Richard J. Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*, ©1979, 1989, 1999, 2009. See also www.kingdomcaloriesministry.com

When you were a child, did your favorite aunt send you books for your birthday? Mine did. Perhaps that's the origin of one of our family mottos: *People who love us give us books*. Dick received four books for his 75th birthday. I cull our books periodically. Our local book fair benefits Northfield Hospital. Children's books in good condition are desperately needed for poor or underfunded schools, and those destroyed by Katrina. Contact Reader to Reader [412-254-8595] or www.readertoreader.org [I'm reminded of Proverbs 14:31...*whoever is kind to the needy honors his Maker.*]

Christianity Today and *World* magazine have published many articles on how much or little Christians give. Quick answer: less than we'd guess, especially if we compare our charitable giving with other items we spend our money on. Recent example from "Sound as a dollar," *World*, 28 February 2009: John Ronsvalle, who co-authored a study about the giving of American Christians, says, "It's difficult to avoid the label of 'lukewarm' when analyzing the Church's level of response to Jesus' Great Commandment and Great Commission. He admits that evangelical Christians were more generous givers than non-religious people, and that Americans were among the most generous in the world. But his study found that *"The total portion of per capita income in 2006 was lower than in the worst year of the Great Depression,"* and that was two years before the bottom fell out of the US economy. To make his point visual, he noted that the missions giving of one large Christian denomination, the Southern Baptist's \$300 million missions budget, doesn't even match the \$310 million dollars that Americans spent on the video game *Grand Theft Auto IV*—on the *first day* of its release.

The widow whom Jesus commended "gave all that she had, her entire living." Most of us give out of our excess. Spring is a perfect time to clean the basement, garage, and closets. One suggestion is to take everything out of a room or closet. Then decide: Do I like this? Do I need this? When was the last time I used this? Northfield has a consignment shop where clothes in good condition are accepted for resale. Leftovers are returned to the owner after three months, or donated to a women's shelter. I usually opt to donate, and also give what I am paid to a ministry that serves the poor. Sometimes we drive to enjoy a cup of tea in beautiful Red Wing, after we have emptied our Escort trunk of boxes of stuff we have culled, as above. Goodwill and the Salvation Army provide jobs for people who can refurbish donated items, and then sell what has been donated at reasonable prices to those who do not have the luxury of buying new stuff.

Cycles are also about recycling and precycling—choosing not to purchase items with excess packaging. We North Americans do not *need* all of our stuff. Yes, let's give sacrificially, but why not also share our books and other excess [such as money saved by eating fewer calories] with those who have less than enough? May it be so. +++