

Joy in Enough's "Big Workshop"

Jenny Tibbles describes a recent *Joy in Enough* event, and her journey against the tide of consumerism

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I can't remember how I came across the *Joy in Enough* workshop, but I do remember being pretty excited by the title and the fact that it was being run by a Christian organisation. I have attended many similar events in the past few years, but never one from a Christian perspective, so I was full of anticipation.

It was the workshop on consumerism that particularly interested me. How do we wrestle with the question of what is "enough"? And, whilst working for real change in society, how do we practically live this out in the here and now?

For this afternoon slot, we formed groups of six or seven and were given a series of cards with topics, case studies and information. There was lots of information about the impact our consumption is having on the planet,

also statistics about recycling, green energy, the impacts of different lifestyles and so on. There were also case studies about the Bruderhof community and the Freecycle network, designed to encourage us to think creatively about new ways of living with more sharing and collaboration, and less waste.

These cards generated lots of discussion around recycling, waste in the system, reasons for consumption and what we struggle with personally. There was so much good content, we could have carried on talking all day!

The activity enabled us to share our own stories too around the table. My journey of questioning our consumption as a culture has been one of growing awareness and action, coupled with increasing concern about the

environmental impacts of unlimited consumption on a limited planet.

About four years ago, at the age of 42, I had run out of the energy needed for my demanding full-time job and thought that there must be a better way to live life. Fortunately, having pretty secure housing, I was able to leave that job to see where life took me, whilst exploring different ways of living at the same time.

I share a house with two other people and we made conscious decisions to use "green energy" providers, shop locally to keep our money in the local economy, order an organic veg box provided by a local co-operative, eat less meat and more vegetables, compost, and generally try and reduce our waste. I had inherited a second-hand bike and started cycling everywhere – a great free way of getting fit in Sheffield!

I also decided to see what things were available for free or at low cost: this led to free photography walks, joining a knitting group, and volunteering at local festivals, which enabled me to see lots of free films and talks and even interview George Monbiot over a falafel!

One thing that I have come to love is clothes swapping. In Sheffield we are really fortunate to have a group called Common Thread who organise regular clothes swaps in the city centre. For £3 and a bag of clean clothes entry fee, you can choose new-to-you clothes each month. There's also a repairs station where you can get clothes repaired. I have acquired some fantastic clothes over the past few years and if I don't like them I can always take them to the next

clothes swap. I have even picked up some designer clothes which I would never have been able to afford usually!

Consequently, my living costs are vastly reduced and I am able to work part-time and have been blessed with work when I need it.

My journey continues. I love to read and research ideas about different ways forward and I've also been reflecting about why we consume so much. It can be a real struggle to uncouple ourselves from our (often unconscious) consumer identity. I'm on the journey from being a consumer to a creator; exploring my creativity in cooking from scratch, making preserves, making bread, repairing things, repurposing old clothes – all the things our grandparents did! This has now become a radical stance against the tide of consumerism!

Foundational to this is knowing that we are enough – just as we are. We don't need to buy that new item of clothing, car, book, or holiday to prove ourselves. This flies in the face of all the marketing and advertising that constantly bombards us. My worth is not in how



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much I earn, where I live, what car I drive (even if it's an electric one!) or even how busy I am. These things trap us in the hamster wheel of busy-ness, work and

then consumption as we have less time to create!

All of this takes time; I know that I am very fortunate to have found a shared living situation and I don't currently have any dependents. However, I would encourage everyone to ask themselves, "what is enough?" and to take the teaching of Jesus seriously. "Therefore, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear....for your heavenly Father knows that you need these, but seek first the kingdom of God..." (from Matthew Ch. 6, v25-34).

I have found these words to be trustworthy. I hope you do too and have a magnificent journey to finding "Joy in Enough!"

Jenny Tibbles lives in Sheffield, and has been involved in youth and community work for 20 years. She is interested in all things green, sustainable & radical!



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