

More than enough?

Aim: This assembly explores consumer culture, questioning the value that we place on possessions and exploring different concepts of wellbeing.

Materials/preparation:

- To give this assembly a personal element, you could prepare to share a story about your most treasured possession and why it is so important to you. If it is portable, you could bring this object in to show pupils.
- Download the *More than Enough?* PowerPoint from christianaid.org.uk/schools

Assembly presentation

Show slide 1 as pupils enter. If you have brought in a treasured possession (see above), then show this to the assembly group and explain a little about why this object means so much to you.

Ask pupils to think about their most treasured possessions, and to suggest what it is that makes these objects important and meaningful to us.

Show slide 2. Often, the value of an object has little to do with what it is worth in terms of money... a beloved teddy bear, a special letter, or a prized photograph might mean much more to us than expensive jewellery, say, or a fancy music player.

Sometimes, our most treasured possessions are things that hold special memories of important people or places, and often, they are things that couldn't easily be replaced if they were lost or stolen.

Ask the class what is it about their particular special object that is so important? Note that in most cases, the importance of these things has little to do with what the thing cost, and everything to do with a deeper meaning – be it love, memories, fun or usefulness.

It is worth keeping that thought in mind as we think about what it is that people really need.

Ask pupils what things are essential for human beings – the things we really cannot do without. If their suggestions are mainly material things (like food, water and medicines), acknowledge these as very important, and then ask them to extend their thoughts to think about things that cannot be seen, but which are still important (like love, friendship, family, safety).

Show slide 3. Often, in our society, we are encouraged to want more than we need. Many of

those messages come from the media, with adverts constantly telling us that we must get the latest gadgets, the most fashionable clothes and the newest toys.

Many of these things do have the power to make us feel good about ourselves, but often that feeling only lasts until we see the next thing we want. And those feelings of never having enough and of always wanting more can leave us feeling quite dissatisfied; they can cloud the things that really matter.

It is part of human nature to want more stuff – but that doesn't mean that 'stuff' makes us happy. Throughout history, wise people have advised that we should resist the temptation to always try to get more, and instead try to be happy with what we have.

Show slide 4. In ancient times, the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu told people:

'Be content with what you have, rejoice in the way things are. When you realise there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.'

– Lao Tzu

Show slide 5. This message is also in the Bible:

'Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.'

– Hebrews 13:5

Ask pupils what they think about these ideas. Do they agree that you should try to 'be content with what you have'? And if you decide to be happy with what you have, then what is there left to aim for?

Show slide 6. Oscar Romero was a famous archbishop from El Salvador, a country in Central America. He bravely spoke up for poor people, but his views were unpopular with some and

because of this he was murdered in 1980. He encouraged people to:

'Aspire [aim] not to **have** more, but to **be** more'.

Ask pupils what they think this means. How can we 'be more'?

Ideas about living simply and having less are particularly important in today's world, where we have a better idea than ever before about the damage that our wastefulness and greed can cause.

We all understand now that the Earth has limited resources, and that we need to be careful not to use everything up – this is why we all recycle our waste. But perhaps we could also think about using less in the first place, and what we might gain from living simply.

In the UK, we can be very wasteful even with the essential things that people need to live, like food and water.

Show slide 7. The Love Food Hate Waste campaign estimates that 7 million tonnes of uneaten food is thrown out from our homes every year. This wastefulness costs the average family around £60 a month in wasted food.

Show slide 8. We also tend to consume much more than people in many other countries. For example, most people in the UK use around 1050 litres of water per week, which is nearly 10 times more water than most people living in Ethiopia use.

Show slide 9. In just over a week, people in the UK produce enough rubbish to fill Wembley stadium. (source: DETR).

Show slide 10. And in one year, we produce enough waste to fill dustbins stretching from

the Earth all the way to the Moon (source: LGB Publications).

But people are becoming smarter about the resources that they use. Just think about what we are already doing in school. (You could list here the efforts that your school is making to reduce waste and use less energy.)

Everywhere you look, people are working together to waste less and recycle more.

Show slides 11–13. In the UK, we now recycle or compost over a quarter of our waste. And across the world, people are recycling more and more each year – as well as coming up with creative ideas to re-use materials.

The charity Christian Aid wants to make sure that people everywhere make good use of the Earth's precious resources, and is supporting people in many of the poorer countries of the world who are finding clever new ways to re-use old materials.

Show slides 14 and 15. In Haiti, young people are getting creative by turning rubbish into plastic bags... and scrap metal into art.

Show slide 16 and 17. In Bangladesh, scrap wood has been used to make a playground... while in Mali, an old tin becomes a watering can.

Christian Aid also asks the government of this country to make sure that it does everything it can to help reduce the harm that we do to the environment.

Reflection

As we go about our day-to-day lives, let's not forget the important things, the things that really matter to us. Let's think about how we might live simply, and with respect for the planet. Let's remember the words of Oscar Romero, who advised people to aim 'not to **have** more, but to **be** more'. What is it exactly that we would like to be?

Action

- The *Emergency Exit* simulation game is a great way to take the themes of this assembly further. The game charts an evacuation from an environmental disaster and challenges pupils to choose which of their personal items are most important – and which they will save when the going gets tough.
- Christian Aid has produced an assembly to explore a different side of Christmas giving. You can download the *Present Day* assembly from christianaid.org.uk/learn
- Christian Aid volunteer teachers visit schools to explore topical global issues with pupils. To book a Christian Aid speaker for your school, email schools@christian-aid.org