

BIBLE STUDY



**BAPTIST
WORLD AID
AUSTRALIA**

Be love. End poverty.

The End of Greed

Consuming as if God, People and the Planet Matter



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The End of Greed

**Consuming as if God, People
and the Planet Matter**

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



**BAPTIST
WORLD AID
AUSTRALIA**

Be love. End poverty.

Copyright

Title: The End Of Greed. Consuming As If God, People And
The Planet Matter. Discussion Guide
Author: Scott Higgins

© 2011 Baptist World Aid Australia

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act no part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without express written permission from Baptist World Aid Australia. Permission is given to reproduce this book by a local church for use by its congregation members provided: 1) the church has directly downloaded the book from www.baptistworldaid.org.au; 2) the book is reproduced and distributed in its entirety; 3) every effort is made to ensure the highest print quality, such as use of a laser printer or photocopies that are clear and clean.

Scripture, unless otherwise stated, taken from the
HOLY BIBLE, TODAY'S NEW INTERNATIONAL
VERSION®. Copyright © 2001, 2005 by Biblica®.
Used by permission of Biblica®. All rights reserved worldwide.

Cover design by Lasso Creative

Endorsed by



Contents

Study 1:	
Stuff. Consuming as if God matters	4
Study 2:	
Generosity. Consuming as if people matter #1	8
Study 3:	
Justice: Consuming as if people matter #2	13
Study 4:	
Care: Consuming as if the planet matters	19
Study 5:	
Kindness. Consuming as if animals matter	23
Study 6:	
Finishing. An ethical meal	26

About the Series

Consumerism, with its conviction that ever increasing levels of consumption is the path to the good life, is the religion of our age. It shapes our values, our dreams, how we spend our time and money, and how we conduct our relationships.

Tragically our addiction to consumption robs us of the time and energy that could otherwise be devoted to knowing and serving our God; neglects and exploits people in poorer countries; inflicts cruelty upon the creatures God calls us to care for; and is degrading the earth on which we depend for our sustenance. Christians however are called to the good life envisioned by Jesus - a life rich in love for God and others while responsibly enjoying and equitably sharing the beauty and bounty of the earth.

In this Bible study series you will explore consumerism and the havoc it is wreaking. At the same time you will have the opportunity to liberate yourself from the chains of consumerism and embrace the truly good life Jesus calls you to.

Study Structure

There are five studies in this book, each exploring a different dimension of consumerism. Each study has three parts:

1. **What is the issue?** This looks at the impact of consumerism on your relationship with God, others, the planet and the animals with whom we share the planet;
2. **What does the Bible say?** Here we ask what God says to us about consumerism and its impacts;
3. **How do I live it out?** What can we do to consume in a way that is healthy for our relationships with God, people, the planet and the animals with whom we share the planet? Each study has simple, achievable actions you can build into your lifestyle.

In each of the studies the three study parts are introduced by a video clip, roughly 4-5 minutes in length. After watching the clip, pause the DVD, spend ten to fifteen minutes discussing the questions provided and then watch the next video clip.

The study will take about an hour to complete. For groups that have more time there are extension questions included in each study. If your group is opting for an hour long session, skip over the questions marked 'Extended study question'. Individuals may however like to consider the extension questions at home.

At the conclusion of the studies we recommend you plan a sixth meeting at which you share an ethically sourced meal and discuss the impact the studies have had on your lives.

Group leaders and members should consider purchasing a copy of *The End of Greed* book that accompanies this series and reading the relevant chapter in preparation for each week's study.

STUDY 1

Stuff

Consuming as if God matters

Have you ever noticed how our culture applauds us when we accumulate? Move into a bigger home, buy a second car, take an overseas holiday and people will say we are ‘getting ahead’. But are we? Is accumulation of things and experiences a sign of success in the eyes of God or does the good life lie somewhere else?

Start video for Study 1. Select “What is the issue?”

1. The average Australian today consumes three times as much as the average Australian living in 1960. Does this surprise you? What things have become normal for you that either didn’t exist or were considered the preserve of the rich in your grandparent’s day?
2. In the book *Enough. Breaking Free From the World of Excess* John Naish says, “We have created a culture that has one overriding message - we do not yet have all we need to be satisfied. The answer, we are told, is to have, see, be and do even more. Always more.” Do you think this is an accurate description of our culture? If so, how has the drive to have more worked itself out in your life?

Extended study question

Read “Consuming more hasn’t made us happier” on page 6. How does this help you understand the drive to consume? What evaluation of consumerism would you offer in light of what you have learned?

Resume video. Select “What does the Bible say?”

3. Read the story of the rich fool in Luke 12:13-21. In the video Scott suggested that the rich man is foolish because he orients his life around his own comfort rather than God’s vision for him and his community. Do you agree? How would the rich fool’s life and community have been different if he had focused on loving God and loving others?
4. After exposing the rich fool, Jesus tells us how to be wise disciples. Read his teaching in Luke 12:22-34. Rather than allowing themselves to be preoccupied with acquiring things, Jesus calls his followers to seek God’s kingdom. Read “What is the Kingdom of God?” on page 7. Do you agree with this description of the Kingdom of God? What would it look like if we made this the goal of our living?

Resume video. Select “How can I live it out?”

5. Write down your top five goals for the next ten years.
6. If seeking the kingdom is the focus of your life, is this reflected in your goals? What new goals could you add? Which existing goals would you drop?
7. Pick one or two new goals to add to your life and one goal to drop out. What steps do you need to put in place to achieve your new goals?

Consuming more hasn't made us happier

Consumerism is a lifestyle in which we seek more things and more experiences in the belief they will make happier. But the promise is a lie. Research suggests that additional consumption has little impact on our happiness. In countries where people are able to meet their basic life needs the link between consumption and happiness is weak, that as consumption levels rise, life satisfaction tends to remain constant. There appear to be two reasons for this.

First, people have a default happiness level to which we continually return. The loss of a job might drag our feelings of happiness down for a time, while a promotion might push our happiness levels up. But these upward and downward swings tend to be temporary. Over time we return to our default level.

Second, we tend to measure our well-being relative to others. When we enjoy the same standards of living as our peers we feel satisfied and when we don't, we feel we are missing out. So we consume more to keep up with everyone around us. But as long as our position relative to others remains constant, all that extra consumption does little to improve our sense of well-being.

What is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God was at the centre of Jesus teaching. Jesus picks up Old Testament hopes that a time would come when God would set the world right. When this happened God would be known and served by all; injustice, oppression and violence would give way to communities marked by equity, justice and love and where everyone has sufficient to meet their needs; and the creation itself would be healed of all that harms. In proclaiming this future, the Old Testament prophets did not imagine us leaving this world for an immaterial realm, but spoke of the time God would remake the existing world. For a good example see Isaiah 65:17-25.

It is the creation of this kind of world that Jesus refers to when he speaks of “the Kingdom of God.” What was dramatically new was Jesus’ claim that the Kingdom of God had already begun in his ministry. Through him God’s reordering of the world had started - people were being restored to right relationship with God, their bodies were being healed, the injustices of the age were challenged and a new community marked by love, equity and justice was being formed. This kind of reordering of the world would continue until his return, upon which the reordering would be made complete.

In light of this the Kingdom of God can be described as: *God’s reordering of the world so that it reflects his purposes. It’s about making right everything that has gone wrong – making right our relationships with God, within ourselves, with each other, with the earth and with the animals.*

STUDY 2

Generosity

Consuming as if people matter #1

In our first study we saw that Australians are consuming at record levels. Our incomes afford most of us the opportunity for significant discretionary spending, that is, spending on things such that are not essential to living such as travel, electronics, and DVDs. This level of affluence affords us wonderful opportunities for generosity toward others. In this study we will ask how we can escape the clutches of greed in favour of lives of extravagant generosity.

Start video for Study 2. Select “What is the issue?”

1. When has your generosity had a positive impact on the life of someone else? Or when has someone shown you generosity that has significantly impacted your life?
2. How did you react when you discovered that Australian households spend an average of \$98 a week on recreation and \$11 a week on their pets, yet donate just \$4.26 per week to charity? Do you think we are more greedy than generous?

Resume video. Select “What does the Bible say?”

3. In 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 Paul says “Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality”. What do you think Paul means by “the goal is equality”? What are the implications for our giving?

4. In 1 Timothy 6:18 the rich are commanded “to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” Prior to this we read:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

“Godliness with contentment” stands in stark contrast to the desire for riches and generosity. From what Paul says how do you think we can achieve “godliness with contentment”? What are the implications for life in a consumer society?

Extended study question

Read “Generosity and christianity’s explosive growth” on page 11. Do you think we have maintained this emphasis on generosity as a defining mark of the Christian life? Would people who are not Christians say that generosity toward those in need is a defining feature of our faith?

Resume video. Select “How can I live it out?”

5. What is your reaction to Alan Barnhardt’s story? Could an approach like his help us move towards the extravagant generosity to which God calls us?
6. In an article for The Briefing magazine, Tony Payne wonders what television programming would look like if a TV magnate decided to run all programming according to Christian principles.

I would particularly look forward to the new version of Better Homes and Gardens. It would become a five-minute program called Perfectly Adequate Homes and Gardens. Each week, a former bricklayer or plumber would take us on a tour of a bog-ordinary family home and say, ‘As you can see, the Wilson family home has plenty of potential. There is lots we could do with this one. However, it does the job pretty well. It’s warm and dry and comfortable. No obvious structural problems. We are going to encourage the Wilsons to be content and leave it as it is.’ Cut to closing credits.

How might adopting an attitude of adequacy help us become more generous?

7. Listed below are some simple steps you can take to start living more generously. Pick one to begin implementing this week.

Ask if you need it

Before making any significant purchase ask, is what I have already sufficient to the task? And if the answer is yes, give away the money you were prepared to spend on that item.

Give up in order to give away

Identify one thing that you regularly spend money on that adds no significant value to your life. Give that up and give the amount you save to a charity or mission organisation.

Give regularly and increase incrementally every year

Make a pledge to give to a charity on a regular basis (e.g. weekly, monthly, quarterly) and set up a direct debit from your bank account. Then increase the amount every year, by say 5% or 10% or 20%, for a set number of years.

Generosity and Christianity's explosive growth

In the first three centuries following Jesus' death Christianity spread at an explosive rate. Historians believe that an extravagant generosity toward the poor was one reason for this.

The book of Acts describes the first Christian community as one where possessions were shared, with the result that no one was in need. This helped create a favourable reputation and an openness to the gospel.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

From the outset then, the church was marked by a radical generosity, and this became one of Christianity's most attractive and defining features, a quality recognised even by its greatest opponents.

Lucian of Samosata, a strong critic of Christianity who lived in the second century, wrote:

The earnestness with which people of this religion [Christianity] help one another in their need is incredible. They spare themselves nothing to this end. Apparently their first law-maker [Moses] has put it into their heads that they all somehow ought to be regarded as brethren.

The fourth century Roman emperor, Julian, was determined to remove the influence of Christianity from his empire and restore worship of pagan gods. In a letter to an official he wrote:

Why then do we ... not observe how the kindness of Christians to strangers, their care for the burial of their dead, and the sobriety of their lifestyle has done the most to advance their cause?... it is disgraceful when no Jew is a beggar and the impious Galileans [i.e. Christians] support our poor in addition to their own; everyone is able to see that our coreligionists are in want of aid from us.

Both the biblical texts and the opponents of Christianity recognise that, motivated by love for others, the early Christian movement was known for its amazing generosity toward those in need. This made Christianity very attractive to many people and it helped create the environment in which people were receptive to the gospel.

STUDY 3

Justice

Consuming as if people matter #2

Many of the products we consume are made in developing countries, from clothes to electronics to coffee and tea. This should be good news for the poor as it generates jobs that can lift them out of poverty. Tragically their experience is often poverty level wages, unsafe work environments, child and forced labour and workplace abuse. In this study we will explore the dark side of global trade, God's expectations for justice, and ways we can ensure our shopping habits help rather than harm workers from the developing world.

Start video for Study 3. Select "What is the issue?"

1. Were you surprised about the exploitation of children and adults in the manufacture of soccer balls? How do you feel about this?
2. A large number of goods we consume are produced in the developing world and are often crafted on the back of exploitation. This includes clothing, shoes, toys, electronics, mobile phones, computers, coffee, tea, chocolate, fish and prawns to name just a few! An example is given below in "Why is that t-shirt so cheap" on page 15. Does it surprise you that exploitation is so widespread? What do you find most confronting in the stories you have heard?

Resume video. Select "What does the Bible say?"

3. In 1 Corinthians 9:7-12 the apostle Paul makes clear that workers should be treated with dignity and paid enough to flourish. What does this mean for the wages and working conditions we should expect for workers making our goods?

4. People in the developing world can experience a range of workplace abuses, including physical and emotional abuse, unsafe working environments, excessive overtime, with-holding of wages, heavy fines for minor infractions, poverty level wages and forced labour. Read James 5:1-6. How is the situation described by James similar to that experienced by workers in developing countries who make our goods? What does the strength of the language suggest about God's attitude?

Resume video. Select "How can I live it out?"

5. What responsibility do you think we bear to developing world workers?
6. It might be tempting to stop buying goods produced in the developing world, but in most instances this will leave developing world workers worse off, for even their poorly paid jobs are better than no job. There are however three ways Australian Christians can consume in ways that help rather than harm developing world workers. Read them, then identify one action you will take this week.

Buy ethically certified products

Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, and UTZ Certified are certification systems that identify products where important social and environmental standards have been met. When you buy tea, coffee, chocolate or clothing, preference products with one of these labels.

Buy from companies that source ethically

Most products you buy will not fit with Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, or UTZ Certified certification systems. But you can preference the products of companies known to source ethically. Go to www.baptistworldaid.org.au for company ratings or purchase a copy of the ethical shopping guide from ethical.org.au.

Speak out

In recent years Cadbury, Mars and Nestle have all introduced certified ethical ingredients into their chocolate range. They did this in response to consumer demand. Add your voice to campaigns calling companies to source ethically. For campaigns in which you can participate go to baptistworldaid.org.au.

Extended study question

Read "How fair is Fairtrade?" on page 17. How do you respond to this story?

Why is that t-shirt so cheap?

“Nothing feels as good as a 100% cotton t-shirt for \$5”. So read the sign above a pile of cheap t-shirts in one of Australia’s leading retailers in October 2011. I wonder if the people who made the shirts would say the same?

The t-shirts were made in Bangladesh, where garment manufacture is the biggest export industry. Costs are kept low by paying the lowest garment worker wages in the world.

In Bangladesh the average size family needs more than 13,500 taka per month (equivalent to around AU\$150) to meet their basic needs (eg food, shelter, clothing, transport, education for their children) and have a very small amount for discretionary spending or saving. Yet garment workers receive little more than 3,000 taka a month, the factories are unsafe (in the first decade of this century 500 women garment workers died in factory fires and thousands were injured at work) and the women are subject to various forms of abuse by their male bosses.

A worker’s rights advocate commented:

You can only understand their life of poverty when you visit their home. Typically, four or five workers will share a room just 10 feet by 10 feet in size. The only furniture may be a shared bed made from boards from shipping crates. The mattress is one inch thick, made with hard and lumpy stuffing. Those who do not fit on the bed sleep on the floor on another thin mattress, or have only a sheet separating them from the hard concrete or mud floor. There may be one shared toilet and a shared kitchen for about 20 workers. They have no running water but a well from which they pump their own water by hand. (Sweatfree Communities, 2010, “Fighting Poverty Wages in Bangladesh”)

The cotton in the \$5 t-shirts most likely came from Uzbekistan, which accounts for almost 50% of Bangladeshi cotton imports. The Uzbeki cotton industry is controlled by the Government and, according to the International Labor Rights Federation,

Each fall...the government orders schools to close and school administrators to send the children out to the fields, where they remain until the cotton harvest is brought in.

Children are required to engage in dangerous and often unsupervised work. This has led to numerous injuries and even deaths...Both children and parents made it clear that all tenth and eleventh graders that worked in the fields were forced to stay in barracks....[which were] 'Unheated, uninsulated field barracks, normally used to store crops and/or farm machinery... filthy and flea-infested, while the biting insects prevented [the children inside] from sleeping. Children were fed mostly bread and turnips.'

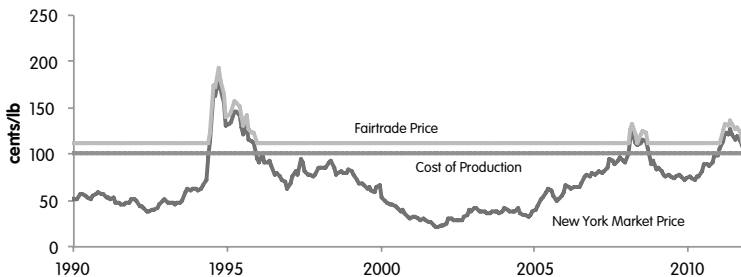
How fair is Fairtrade?

Fairtrade is a movement that builds fair trade relationships between producers in poorer nations and buyers in affluent nations. Developing world producers form cooperatives and buyers from affluent nations agree to:

- pay the cooperative a fair price, which is defined as covering all the costs of production, including wages;
- provide affordable finance to the cooperative and;
- pay a 10% premium on top of the purchase price. The cooperative use the premium for improvements in their community.

Developing world cooperative members agree they will not use slave labour, debt bondage or child labour (except for children working a little after school to help on the family farm) and will farm in environmentally sustainable ways. Independent monitoring ensures these standards are met.

Robusta coffee prices 1990-2011



Sources: International Coffee Organisation, Fairtrade International

The significance of this pricing model can be seen in the chart above. It shows the market price for robusta coffee beans compared to the Fairtrade price. For most of the years between 1990 and 2011 the price paid to farmers was lower than their costs. This saw multinational coffee corporations making large profits while the developing world farmers growing the coffee could not afford to send their children to school or buy medicines! Farmers in the Fairtrade system however were always paid enough to make production worthwhile.

The impacts can be profound. Julius Ethang'atha, a retired tea producer from Michmikuru, Kenya, helped introduce Fairtrade while working for the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA). He tells his story:

You can't keep all your eggs in the same basket, so we try many things in Kenya. I tried tea. When I was working for the KTDA, buyers asked for Fairtrade. It wasn't easy to become certified, but I saw it was the best way out for our people.

There was a huge impact on the first communities to work with Fairtrade. They were poor communities; they did not have water, dispensaries or schools close to them. The money they got from tea was used for food and clothes, but now they also get a premium that they can use to improve their social living. So far they have set up impressive schools and daycare centres, dispensaries, maternity units, water systems, bridges and roads.

... You see, the farmer receives just 5% of the wealth in tea. When the consumer pays more for Fairtrade tea, this extra money goes to the farmer and improves lives. But if the whole value chain was made fairer, Africa would be lifted out of poverty.

Fairtrade is the right way to shop. It puts a smile on the faces of children in Africa, and it makes their lives bearable.

STUDY 4

Care

Consuming as if the planet matters

The earth God gave us is a wonderfully balanced system. It has the capacity to provide resources for us to consume, to continually renew itself and to absorb the wastes we create. The rise of consumer culture is however straining the capacity of the earth to continue doing this. In this study we will explore the impact of consumerism on the environment and ask what it means to be good stewards of the earth in a consumerist age.

Start video for Study 4. Select “What is the issue?”

1. What did you find most surprising or challenging from what you heard?
2. Read “A safe operating space” on page 21. Most discussion of the environment these days focuses on climate change. How does including these additional five areas of environmental threat add to the discussion?

Resume video. Select “What does the Bible say?”

3. Read Psalm 104:10-15. How would you characterise God’s relationship to creation as described in these verses?
4. In Genesis 1:26-28 humankind is called to “fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” We are to do this as people made in the image of God. What does this suggest about our attitude and responsibilities toward the environment?

Extended study question

Read “Salvation” on page 22. Which view of salvation has most influenced you and your understanding of a Christian approach to the environment?

Resume video. Select “How can I live it out?”

5. The three major causes of environmental degradation are: population growth; consumption levels; and the resource intensity of production. How does this impact the way we apply the biblical call to stewardship? What do you think humanity can do to address the three drivers of environmental degradation?
6. Listed on the next page are environmentally friendly ways you can consume. Read through the list and select one or two areas to introduce into your lifestyle in the coming week.

Reduce your waste

For example, avoid products with excessive packaging; buy biodegradable and phosphorus free cleaning products; avoid disposable products if a non-disposable option is available; buy energy efficient appliances; put on warmer/cooler clothing rather than turning on the air conditioner.

Re-use products wherever you can

For example, repair rather than replace things when they break; buy recycled paper products; borrow things that have only an occasional use.

Reconsider whether you need it

Before you make that next purchase ask yourself if you really need it. And if you already have something that does the job don't upgrade until what you have no longer works.

Buy responsibly

When making purchases look for the most environmentally friendly option. For example, look for seafood and paper products that have been sustainably grown and harvested - the Forest Stewardship Council and Marine Stewardship Council labels are a good sign.

Raise your voice

Participate in an advocacy campaign. A good place to discover these is Worldwide Fund for Nature (www.wwf.org.au) or the Australian Conservation Foundation (www.acfonline.org.au).

A safe operating space

In 2009 a group of eminent earth scientists wrote a paper titled “A Safe Operating Space for Humanity”. They argued that there are nine environmental boundaries that once crossed will significantly reduce the capacity of the earth to function as a safe operating space for humanity. They proposed that three of the boundaries have already been crossed - climate change; loss of biodiversity; and disruption of the nitrogen cycle. In addition to this we are perilously close to crossing three other boundaries - acidification of the oceans; change of land use; and disruption of the phosphorus cycle.

Take the acidification of the oceans. Since the Industrial Revolution humanity has been burning fossil fuels, which contain large stores of carbon dioxide. As we burn these fuels the carbon dioxide they contain is released into the air. Much of the carbon dioxide has then been absorbed by the oceans, causing them to grow more acidic. This is reducing the ability of corals to form reefs, which will mean fewer and more brittle reefs in the coming years. The impacts will be considerable – coral reefs are an important source of food for millions of people and a buffer against storms. Acidification will likely mean less food and more storm damage, especially for those who are poorer and without the financial resources to pay more for food or to protect against storms.

Salvation

Ask what “salvation” means and many Christians will answer that it is going to heaven when they die. The image is of an immaterial soul leaving the human body and the earth in order to enjoy an immaterial eternity with God.

The bible’s image of salvation is, however, very different. It is not souls leaving earth for heaven but heaven coming to earth and making everything new. Passages such as Isaiah 65:17-25, Romans 8:18-25 and Revelation 21-22 describe:

- human beings with redeemed bodies, hearts and minds;
- living on an earth that is bountiful, shared and free from disease and disaster;
- in communities that are safe, just, and welcoming; and
- where God is present with immediacy and intimacy.

The implications for our engagement with the environment are profound. If the central work of Christ is to free us from the earth, then the earth arguably has little value and should be of little concern for the followers of Jesus. We should focus on the one thing that counts – getting souls into heaven. If however Christ died and rose to redeem the entire created order, the earth assumes great value. It is valued and loved by God and, by working for its healing now, we witness to the greater healing to come.

STUDY 5

Kindness

Consuming as if animals matter

Consumerism brings us into contact with animals almost every day. We eat them, wear them, hunt them, and impinge on their habitats. Farming has changed dramatically to meet our demand for meat and other animal products, leading to claims that animal welfare is, in some instances, significantly compromised. Meanwhile habitats of wild animals are being destroyed at such a rate that a large number of species are becoming extinct. In this study we consider how we might consume in a way that is kind toward our fellow creatures.

Start video for Study 5. Select “What is the issue?”

1. John Wesley said “I believe in my heart that faith in Jesus Christ can and will lead us beyond an exclusive concern for the well-being of other human beings to a broader concern for the well-being of the birds in our backyards, the fish in our rivers, and every living creature on the face of the earth.” What do you make of Wesley’s view? What place does the well-being of animals have in your life and faith?
2. We can relate to animals as objects or subjects. Objects are things, such as a rock or a table. We have no moral obligations to them and are free to use them for our own ends. Treated as an object an animal is no different to any other object. It is simply a thing we can do with as we please. The only interest that counts is ours. Treated as a subject, however, an animal is seen as a living, conscious being that can feel pain and has interests of its own. Do you think consumerism tends to view animals as objects or subjects? Do you think that is acceptable?

Resume video. Select “What does the Bible say?”

3. In the video we were reminded of God’s care for the animals. What implications does this have for our attitude to animal suffering?
4. Genesis 1:26-28 grants humankind rule over the animals. According to Scripture how should a good ruler relate to his/her subjects (see Proverbs 31:1-9 and the example of Jesus)? What does this say about our responsibility to animals? How would this apply to the stories Scott shared in the video (teenagers playing with puffer fish, rearing of meat chickens, clearing of orangutan habitat)?

Resume video. Select “How can I live it out?”

5. The Bible pictures humans as vegetarian at creation. In a fallen world however, God permitted the use of animals for food, for labour and for sacrifice (e.g. Genesis 9:1-3; Deuteronomy 25:4). Animals however must not be mistreated: “The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.” (Proverbs 12:10). Read the “The five freedoms” on page 25. Do you think these are a good standard for measuring animal welfare? What changes would be required in the way we treat our pets, farm animals, recreational animals and wild animals if we were to take these seriously?
6. The list below identifies ways we can practise kindness toward animals. Read through the list and select one action to implement this week.

Practise animal welfare around the home

Be considerate in the treatment of animals around your home – pets, insects, birds, reptiles, etc. Ensure your pets enjoy the five freedoms.

Purchase sustainably harvested products

Buy products that bear the Forest Stewardship Council or Marine Stewardship Council certification logos.

Purchase animal products that have been farmed in accord with the five freedoms

A simple rule of thumb is to buy free range products or products endorsed by animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA.

Participate in animal welfare advocacy campaigns

For campaigns in which you can participate see the websites of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (www.wwf.org.au) and the RSPCA (www.rspca.org.au).

The five freedoms

The RSPCA argues that all animals should enjoy five freedoms:

1. *Freedom from hunger and thirst:* by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;
2. *Freedom from discomfort:* by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area;
3. *Freedom from pain, injury or disease:* by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment;
4. *Freedom to express normal behaviour:* by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind;
5. *Freedom from fear and distress:* by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

STUDY 6

Finishing

An ethical meal

A great way to finish off this series is for your study group to share an ethical meal.

- Everyone should wear a Fairtrade item of clothing;
- Everyone should bring a dish that is made from ethically sourced ingredients (e.g. free range chicken, Marine Stewardship Council certified fish);
- Serve Fairtrade tea and coffee;
- Choose a Baptist World Aid project (www.baptistworldaid.org.au) to which everyone can bring a donation;
- Choose an advocacy campaign focused on ethical consumption (www.baptistworldaid.org.au) and select an action the group can take together around the table;
- Over the meal have everyone share the main lessons they are taking away from the series and how they have and will be applying them to their life;
- Spend time praying for each other as you seek to live free from greed.

Baptist World Aid Australia

Baptist World Aid Australia is an aid and development agency known for the quality of its work both on the field overseas and in educating and mobilising Christians in Australia around poverty and justice.

If you are looking to sponsor a child, Baptist World Aid has superb programs in a number of countries. At the heart of each program is the conviction that God wants children everywhere to survive, develop, participate in their communities, and be safe. The programs work with children, families and the wider community to create an environment where these outcomes can occur. This way the root causes of child poverty and ill-being are addressed, all children in the community benefit, and your sponsored child becomes the lens through which you see change occurring.

Baptist World Aid also supports brilliant community development work with adults. In Nepal, for example, a family who had been squatting in the forest participated in a Baptist World Aid supported project. Before joining in an poultry farming program they were living in a leaky, draughty shack, too poor to eat well or send their daughter to school. The program got the parents started in a chicken business. A few years down the track they now have a thriving chicken business selling chickens. They have over 1,800 chickens, have purchased land, built a home, eat well and their daughter is in school. This sort of life transformation is repeated in Baptist World Aid supported programs all over the world.

Equally powerful is Baptist World Aid's incarnational approach. The vast majority of programs are implemented by indigenous Christian organisations. Staff not only work but often live in the communities they serve. They do not require community members to participate in Christian education programs, but work to help them to overcome their poverty and take control of their futures whatever their religion. As they do this Baptist World Aid's partners are a powerful witness to the grace and love of God, the witness of local churches is strengthened, and in many project areas people have come to faith in Christ.

At home, Baptist World Aid has a heart to mobilise Christians to a whole-hearted response to poverty, to go beyond occasional acts of generosity to lifestyles that are oriented to achieving justice for people living in poverty. To this end Baptist World Aid has developed a range of programs and resources available to churches and individuals. Our advocacy program, Catalyst, has been hailed by AusAid accreditors as

“simply extraordinary” and a number of pastors who participated in our 50:50 preaching and bible study series (now available as Be Love. Five Ways To Love The Poor.) described it as among the most effective programs they’ve ever run.

Undergirding all this is a team of dedicated staff and volunteers passionate about ending poverty.

To discover more visit www.baptistworldaid.org.au.

Global Mission Partners

Global Mission Partners is Churches of Christ at work in the world. Through Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) communities benefit through projects that are designed to change people's lives. Whether it is children in South Sudan or Zimbabwe, people struggling with a lack of access to clean water in Vietnam, or young people being educated in Vanuatu, the unifying strand in all these projects is the way COCOA takes people seriously.

Projects are implemented by local country partners and are most often designed and undertaken by local people working in partnership with nearby churches. Such partnerships are vital as it is the people in need themselves that are impacted by their situation and so have insights into ways that problems can be solved. COCOA seeks to work with people as they identify ways to improve their own circumstances.

It is exciting to see the changes that happen. In Zimbabwe the drilling of a well brings fresh clean water untainted by cholera. Funding the provision of water and a hand pump means vegetables can be grown and so diet improves and income is ensured. This is a life-changing outcome.

Women in Vietnam find dignity and a sense of community through employment. They gain self-worth as the products they make and design are sold, the quality of their work is affirmed and they receive a consistent income.

Children who are victims of war in South Sudan and live in Marialbai have new hope through the Emmanuel Children's Centre. More than 200 children are cared for by night with village families and then during the day gather at the centre for school, health care, sport and food. 'Before and after' pictures tell a story of the change in the lives of these children. After great suffering receiving the care provided gives hope to both the children and the community as a whole.

An enthusiastic team leads the ministry of Global Mission Partners and Churches of Christ Overseas Aid. Each team member is committed personally to developing partnerships between people and churches in Australia and people living in poverty overseas. Together with our partners we want to resource and release opportunities for life changing partnerships to develop and grow.

To discover more, visit www.inpartnership.org.au



**BAPTIST
WORLD AID
AUSTRALIA**

Be love. End poverty.

The consumer culture in which we are immersed urges us to acquire as many things and experiences as our incomes will allow. But what if our habit of acquiring more is simply a modern manifestation of greed? In this Bible study series you'll discover how consumerism is damaging to your relationship with God, saps your capacity to be generous, exploits people in poorer countries, wreaks havoc on the planet and inflicts suffering on animals. You'll also identify simple, practical steps towards Christ-shaped consuming that embodies love for God, people, the planet and our fellow creatures.

Each study consists of three sections: an introduction to the issue to be discussed; a look at what the Bible has to say; and how you can put what you have learned into practice. Each of these sections is preceded by a 3-5 minute video segment that forms the platform for discussion.

Endorsed by



www.baptistworldaid.org.au