

Breathe

Less stuff, more life

INSIDE...

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Is This Living?
A funny thing
about PS3



Smile!
What Nokia
can teach us

Pause Before You Buy

Cutting the nerve of impulse buying

When was the last time you deliberately chose to wait before buying something? It's not something we tend to do much. Like laboratory dogs trained to salivate at the sound of a bell, we're conditioned to buy as soon as we know what we want. We even buy before we *can* – hence the mounting personal debt levels in the UK.

Buying has become a reflex reaction. Thanks to the smooth workings of retail therapy and the speed of the internet, the time between the decision to buy and the actual purchase has grown shorter and shorter: in some cases it's a matter of seconds. Click, click, enter PIN number; it's all yours.

In Praise of Waiting

But is this such a good thing? Admittedly, there are some things it is a great advantage to be able to buy quickly (like emergency dental treatment, or today's paper). But in the process of becoming such speedy consumers, we've lost the art of waiting.

The act of delaying gratification – learning to wait – is actually a key to happiness. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck called it 'the only decent way to live'. So it shouldn't surprise us that the

What is *Breathe*?

- A space to think about how we handle money, time and possessions in a Christian way
- Non-judgemental, realistic and simple to be part of
- We want to
APPRECIATE life more fully
REFUSE the consumer dream
CONNECT with others
CHOOSE a more generous lifestyle

Breathe is a Christian network for simpler living. It represents orthodox Christians of all kinds and is overseen by Friends: Phil Whittall, Chris Webster and Rev. Mark Powley.



Everyone's getting in on it: a 'credit card' for pausing before you buy produced by the Methodist Church

Bible is full of waiting. Abraham waits for God's promises, the psalms wait for deliverance, the prophets wait for the coming of God, and so on. Even in the New Testament 'if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently' (Romans 8:25).

In becoming such speedy consumers, we've lost the art of waiting

Pause Before You Buy

For an activity that basically involves doing nothing, waiting is pretty powerful. In fact, it is a major tool in resisting consumerism. This is where *Pause Before You Buy* comes in. It's about cutting the nerve of impulse buying, and rediscovering the art of waiting.

What's the point of waiting? Waiting buys us time – it gets us out of situations where we're pressured by advertising, sales patter or others' expectations and into a place of perspective where we can make a wise choice. Waiting gives God space – if we pray, he will give us the wisdom we require; he may answer our need another way; or he may show us that we don't really need the purchase at all. Pausing before you buy has been advocated by the great spiritual writer Richard Foster, by debt expert Keith Tondeur and by environmentalist Matthew Sleeth. Why not try it and see how it changes your habits of shopping and living?

Continued over the page

Pause Before You Buy

Continued...

How it works

Where possible, before buying something:

Wait

Delay the purchase for, say, 2 weeks
See if you really need it
Appreciate what it's like to live without it

Ask

Can I make it, make do without or borrow it?
Will God bring it another way?
What is the best outcome for others and the environment?

Decide

Decide not to buy
OR buy with gratitude*

* And appreciate it all the more because you waited!

If you think you want something, wait a month. One of three things will happen if you follow this sage advice. One: you will forget. Two: you will no longer need it. Or three: you will need it more. Most often, numbers one and two will happen.



J. Matthew Sleeth
Serve God, Save the Planet, p. 83



Do stop and think before you buy. Do I really need this item? Try waiting a week (well, at least a couple of days!) and see if you still want to buy.

Keith Tondeur
Better Money Management: A Guide to Money Saving Ideas, p. 25

I propose an exercise which many have found liberating. When you decide that it is right for you to buy a particular item, see if God will not bring it to you without your having to buy it... Once a decision is made to secure a particular item, hold it before God in prayer for perhaps a week. If it comes, bless God; if not, re-evaluate your need for it; and if you still feel you should have it go ahead and purchase the item. One clear advantage to this approach is that it effectively ends all impulse buying. It gives time for reflection so that God can teach us if the desire is necessary.

Another obvious benefit is the way in which it integrates the life of devotion with the life of service. The supply of our material needs becomes an exciting venture of faith!



Richard Foster
Freedom of Simplicity, p. 143

Adventures in Waiting 2007-2008

Really, though, what happens when you try this? Well, as part of the Breathe Consumer Detox I started to try this (see the website, Consumer Detox: Part 2). Anytime I felt ready to buy something, instead of rushing in, I waited. The results are below:

The TV Our TV had been on the blink for a while (we had to teach our kids to strike it in just the right place whenever the screen inexplicably went blank). After a few weeks of us praying and waiting, a friend saw our kids assaulting the TV set and offered us a TV they weren't using. It works a treat.

The Video The video (another wedding present - on the plus side at least our marriage is outlasting the presents) gave up the ghost. I waited for a while, during which time I had a desperation-induced brainwave that extended its life for 6 months. When it finally died, we prayed again, and within the fortnight my neighbour (not a Christian) offered us a video and a telly. I said to her, 'you'll never guess what: I've actually been asking God for this!'

The Vac This also broke (what's wrong with our house?!). Within a week a family member offered to buy us a new one.

The Dishwasher Judge us all you like, but the prospect of two dishwasherless weeks with three small kids was pretty scary. It felt tough to even decide to wait. After the fortnight, we went ahead and bought one anyway (a low energy model, for what it's worth), but boy do we appreciate now what a privilege it is to have one!

My Brollie I lost my new brollie. Brollies, gloves, why do I always lose this stuff? After several months I capitulated and bought a replacement. The next day I found my old one. Good old Boots, they gave me my money back.

Mark Powley is a friend of Breathe and an Associate Pastor at St Paul's Hammersmith



When I first saw the slogan for Sony's Playstation 3, I laughed out loud. I laughed because I saw it first at the tail end of a miserable commute, in the rain, and as I was waiting to cross the road it passed me broadside on the advertising panels of a double decker bus: 'this is living'. I'm sure it wasn't what the marketing team behind the slogan intended, but it came across like an injection of reality, a pinprick to the glamorous bubble of London living.

Of course, 'this is living' is meant to be much more dramatic than that. It's meant to provoke wonder and awe, and with any luck, a sufficient sense of jealousy and inadequacy that we go and purchase a Playstation 3. But when you think about it, the claim that the Playstation 3 experience is 'living' is not only manifestly preposterous, but deeply ironic, because of course Playstation are selling a virtual reality, a simulacra. The slogan would be accurate only if it said 'this is (not) living'.

“When I first saw the slogan I laughed out loud”

The trouble doesn't end there either, because presumably if Playstation 3 is living, then everything else is not living. PS3 owners are suddenly alive, so non-PS3 owners must be dead. There's no shortage of adverts promising to make you healthier, happier and prettier, but to bring you to life, that's quite a claim. You could almost re-phrase Jesus' words from John 10:10 - "The PS3 has come that you might have life, and have it in all its fullness". Put like that, the almost blasphemous arrogance of Sony's slogan is seen for what it is - a call to worship to those who have made an idol of technology.

At which point, you can either weep, or gnash your teeth at the futility of it all. Or, you can stand by the kerb and watch it all go by, and laugh.

Jeremy Williams

Read more at <http://makewealthhistory.org/>



"What is living? Is it working like a robot until we become obsolete? Watching so much TV news you are too terrified to go out and buy the bar of chocolate you need to make yourself feel safe? Is that really what you're here for? Maybe God's grand plan was for you to sit in a meeting for 65 long years striving for idiocracy? Congratulations! You've been named Employee of the Month. Do you want pride with that? One man's living is another man's dying. Now if you'll excuse me. I need to go and buy myself a bar of chocolate"

Kovac – a character from the PS3 *This is Living* ad campaign

Humanifesto

I want to be a grace guerilla,
no longer a chameleon of karma;
the time has come to stand out from the crowd.
I want to give forgiveness
a fighting chance of freeing me,
to live in love and live it out loud.

I want to drink deep of the foolishness of wisdom
instead of swallowing the wisdom of fools,
to find a source in the deeper mines of meaning.
I want to search out the unsearchable,
to invoke the invisible,
to choose the truths the TV hypnotists aren't screening.

No camouflage,
no entourage,
no smoothly fitting in.
I want a faith that goes further than face value
and a beauty that goes deeper than my skin.

I want to be untouched by my possessions
instead of being possessed by what I touch,
to test the taste of having nothing to call mine,
to hold consumption's cravings back,
to be content with luck or lack,
to live on water as well as on wine.

I want to spend myself on those I think might need me,
not spend all I think I need on myself.
I want my heart to be willing to make house calls.
Let those whose rope is at an end
find in me a faithful friend.
Let me be known as one who rebuilds broken walls.

No camouflage,
no entourage,
no smoothly fitting in.
I want a faith that goes further than face value
and a beauty that goes deeper than my skin.

I want to be centred outside the circle,
to be chiselled from a different seam.
I want to be seduced by another story
and drawn into a deeper dream,
to be anchored in an undiscovered ocean,
to revolve around an unfamiliar sun,
to be a boom box tuned to an alternate station,
a bullet fired from a different gun.

No camouflage,
no entourage,
no smoothly fitting in.
I want a faith that goes further than face value
and a beauty that goes deeper than my skin.

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Have you smiled at anyone today?

too many people these days grunt and ignore their way through life

we used to be a nation that would happily talk for lengthy periods to perfect strangers about the weather

we used to know our butchers, bakers, though probably not any candlestick makers. But we did know the old woman at the post office. When did we slip out of the habit?

however it isn't too late for us

we could, with a little effort, be a lot nicer too each other

so: between the hours of 12am and noon say "good morning" or "morning", noon to 5pm a simple "hello" will do and 5pm to 12am "evening"

good luck

*Be More Nokia**



Nokia employees being nice to people

* We liked this Nokia ad. Of course, Breathe could point out that it's partly *because* of mobile phones that people are less aware of the others around them. But maybe this is an opportunity for grace. Your mission: to greet strangers on a regular basis. Not always being on the phone may help, but you'll need some polite courage, too. Be More Nokia? Be more human.

On a similar note, watch out for Change Britain, a campaign with over 45,000 members. Their Facebook web-group explains, 'On and after April 2nd, we will defy British culture by smiling, saying hello and potentially sharing a wave with people we do not know in order to change Britain'. Sounds like a good idea. Why don't we join them?

Top Tips

From *52 ways to Simplify your Life* by Lynn Gordon (Chronicle Books)

1) **Learn to say no.** Live within your limits and avoid the temptation to overeating, overexercising, overworking, overcommitting and overspending.

2) **Do it yourself.** Heart surgery aside, take pleasure in what you can do with your own hands. Be a creator, not just a consumer.

3) **Enjoy imperfection.** Give yourself, and the people around you, a break by enjoying the imperfections and idiosyncrasies that come with being human.

4) **Cheap thrills.** Remember how simple the following pleasures can be:

- write a postcard to a friend
- tip a street musician
- read a library book
- walk barefoot on grass
- buy some fresh-baked bread
- share a bag of sweets
- give a single rose
- have a bubble bath
- hug somebody
- feed ducks
- smile

Don't Waste Your Time

This brief notice is to inform subscribers of Breathe not to waste their time supporting the Local Works campaign (featured Breathe 6, Easter 2007). The reason being that the campaign has been successful! The Sustainable Communities Bill has now passed into law, and will help communities to resist shop closures and return diversity and life to local town centres. I guess campaigning does pay off sometimes...

Wherever you are,

Be all there