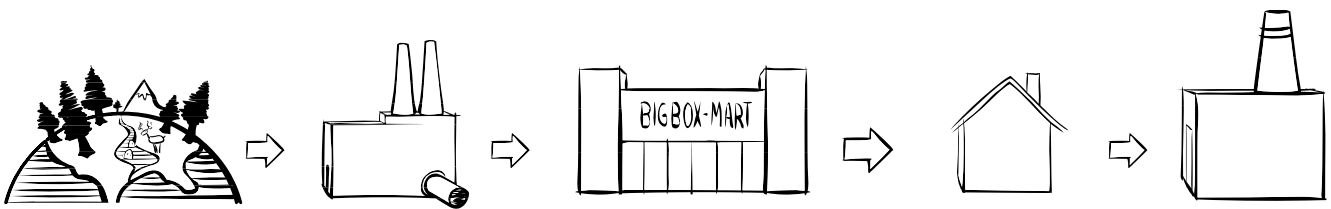


# SESSION 2: THE STORY OF STUFF

LET THERE BE...STUFF?  
A SPIRIT-FILLED RESPONSE TO A CONSUMER-CRAZED WORLD  
A Faith-Based Program for Christian Teens



created by

THE STORY OF  
**STUFF**  
PROJECT

  
**GreenFaith**<sup>SM</sup>  
Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth

[www.storyofstuff.org](http://www.storyofstuff.org)

[www.greenfaith.org](http://www.greenfaith.org)

version 1.0

# SESSION 2: OVERVIEW

## ENTER AND CONNECT (8 MIN.)

- Opening prayer
- Promise Poster
- Check-in

## INTRODUCE (8 MIN.)

## THINK (25 MIN.)

- Homework

## ENGAGE (10 MIN.)

- *The Story of Stuff*

## REFLECT (5 MIN.)

- Scripture

## INSPIRE (1 MIN.)

- Teen Activist Story

## ENACT (5 MIN.)

## EXIT (5 MIN.)

- Option 1 – Love thy neighbor while resources shrink
- Option 2 – We're in it together
- Blessing

# Preparing for Session Two

## Facilitation Preparation

Watch the film and reflect on the thoughts and feelings it stirs in you. What is your own relationship to your Stuff? How does the message of the film challenge it? Be ready to share honestly about your own experience with your students. We offer some suggestions for responding to some challenging questions students might ask after seeing the film. Read these and familiarize yourself with the responses. If you're not comfortable responding or you don't know the answer, don't pretend you do. You can ask the whole group what they think the answer is. Or, invite them to explore why the answer to the question is important; what difference would it really make to them? to Creation?

Recognize that often, underneath a challenging question or general resistance is fear. Asking them what they're feeling and validating the feeling without invalidating the challenge can help. Help them see how much courage it really takes to face challenging truths. Affirm them for doing as well as they are. If there isn't any resistance, great! Don't stir it up if none exists.

## Overview

This session is about the problems our current consumption patterns create. It uses the film, *The Story of Stuff* to show that the way we consume things is trashing the planet, hurting people, and that we're not even having fun! It provides an overview of the themes for the whole course. Future sessions will take segments of the film, deepen the learning and make them more relevant to students' lives. This session provides the opportunity for students to reflect on the impact of consumption as a whole and be open to all its implications.

## Goals

- Provide an overview of the impact of consumption on vulnerable populations and the planet
- Orient students to the journey ahead and make them eager to do, learn, and act
- Support students in facing the hard truth about the state of our world
- Support students to face difficult truths about the impact of their own lifestyles and world.

## Themes

### Religious:

Sometimes God calls us to move beyond our resistance and face difficult challenges. Often, God sends messengers to awaken our sense of the urgency of these challenges. These messengers are like prophets and we need to take their messages seriously.

### Secular:

Our system is in crisis. The way we make, use, and throw away stuff is trashing the planet, poisoning our bodies and not giving us any real joy.

### Religious Text

- Hosea 4:1-3
- Matthew 3:1-3; 7-10

## SUPPLY CHAIN OF A LAPTOP



## Materials for Session 2

- The Story of Stuff* DVD or download
- DVD player or computer & projector if needed
- Promise Poster
- Closing – Love Thy Neighbor – chairs, music
- Handouts
  - Session 2 Reading Sheets- 1 per 2-3 students
  - Session 2 Action Plan forms- 1 per student

## Session 2 To-Do List

- Make copies of Session 2 Readings sheet, 1 for every 2 students, and have them ready to hand out.
- The Story of Stuff* video screening. Either download the video for free off the website: <http://storyofstuff.force.com/download> or order a DVD online for \$10 at: [www.storyofstuff.org/films.php](http://www.storyofstuff.org/films.php).
- Right Stuff Action Board – Post a piece of paper on the wall and write “Right Stuff Actions: Session 2” as the title. Have tape and pens available.
- Promise Poster – Post the poster on the side wall where everyone can see it.
- Keep or re-post Caring for Creation mural on wall.
- Make copies of Action Plans, 1 per student and have them ready to hand out.

## Biblical Texts

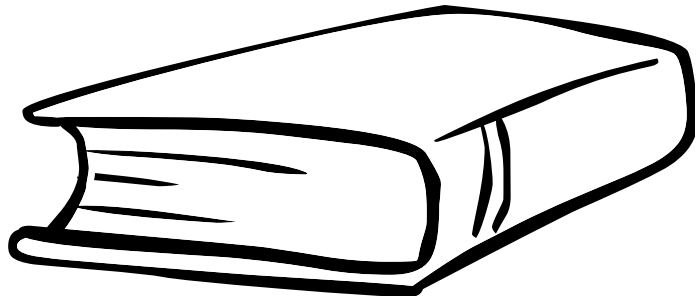
### Hosea 4:1-3

Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel;  
for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land.  
There is no faithfulness or loyalty,  
and no knowledge of God in the land.  
Swearing, lying, and murder,  
and stealing and adultery break out;  
bloodshed follows bloodshed.  
Therefore the land mourns,  
and all who live in it languish;  
together with the wild animals  
and the birds of the air,  
even the fish of the sea are perishing.

### Matthew 3:1-3; 7-10

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,  
'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the  
prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,  
'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight." '

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them,  
'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit  
worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our  
ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.  
Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not  
bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'



## Notes on Biblical Passage

In Biblical times, people who offered the kind of moral challenge *The Story of Stuff* provides were called prophets. They often weren't popular, because they conveyed God's judgment against society's status quo and against deeply engrained habits. Our two Bible readings this week are selections about two prophets – Hosea and John the Baptist.

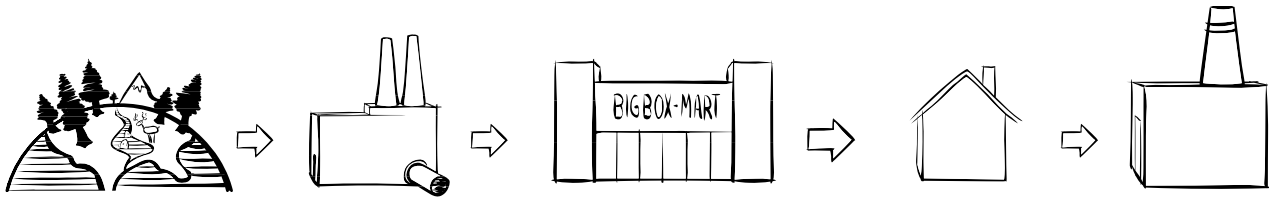
**Hosea**, who prophesied between 750-722 BCE, was harshly critical of the behavior of the Israelites. During Hosea's lifetime, many of Israel's cities had grown wealthy. A small class of rich landowners and merchants began to exploit or enslave their poorer fellow citizens. At the same time, many of these richer Israelites had become comfortable worshipping foreign gods. Hosea felt that their behavior was immoral, and the book of Hosea depicts a husband married to an adulterous wife, a metaphor for the betrayal of God by Israel, which has "played the harlot" by their immoral behavior and their misdirected worship. Hosea prophesied that God would judge Israel because of their wrongdoing and lack of faith, and connected human sinfulness with the destruction not only of human society but also with the devastation of the earth.

Unfortunately for Israel, Hosea's prophecy came true. In 721 BCE, the Assyrian ruler Sargon invaded the northern kingdom of Israel, where Hosea lived and prophesied, and deported nearly 30,000 Israelites to Persia.

**John the Baptist** is well-known to Christians as the prophet who foretold the coming of Jesus. John's message was that the realm of God was at hand, and that people needed to turn away from their wickedness – to repent – in order to receive the love and fulfillment that God promised. Each of the four gospels show John the Baptist criticizing representatives of the ruling classes of the day and telling them in no uncertain terms that they needed to demonstrate their faith in God through their behavior. They should not rest on their laurels and assume that they had won God's approval. The political and religious rulers of the day found John to be a threatening figure and he was eventually executed because he had dared to criticize the personal behavior of Herod, the Roman ruler of the region.

As these two examples show, the Bible is clear that the role of a prophet is a vital and dangerous one. Prophets represent the message of God to people and societies who are often unwilling to reckon with God's high moral standards. How have we responded to the prophetic messages that we've heard in our own lives? Have we resisted? Have we been faithful, and wrestled with the challenging messages we've received? Have we done both? And in leading this course, what can we say to the youth that will help them learn to respond to challenging but vitally important messages in courageous, constructive ways?

# SESSION 2 – The Story of Stuff



## Enter and Connect - (8 min)

### Opening prayer (1 min)



*Dear God, because you love us so much, you challenge us at times to face painful truths and solve difficult problems, all in your service and for the well-being of your people and planet. Bless us as we learn about the ways in which our consumption hurts the community of Creation and open our minds to learn how to protect the Earth. We pray this in Jesus' name, AMEN*

- Look at the Promise Poster together and ask students to raise the hand with the promise string on it if they intend to keep the promises during this session.
- Check-in: Have students share binder cover and ask what about Creation gave them the experience of awe and wonder last week. As they do, take role on the roster.
- Homework Check: Ask who did their homework. In pairs (not their buddies), have them tell each other what they did and how it went. (2 min. ea.) Back in the large group, have them each say how many points they earned that week (tally the points on the tally sheet) and choose a highlight to share. Have them post any pictures they brought on the Right Stuff Action board.
- Hand out Session 2 Readings Sheets.



## Introduce (3 min)

Recap the previous week, if needed.  
Ask the students:

### SAY THIS

*What did we do last week?  
What did we learn?*

Have students take turns reading, one reader per paragraph:

### READ ALoud

*1.1 -Last session we opened our hearts to Creation and to each other. But it's not just about our hearts. To protect the environment effectively we also have to use our minds. We have to educate ourselves about the state of the planet and where it will be heading in the very near future if we do nothing about it. We need knowledge about what we can do and which actions will make the biggest difference. And we have to have knowledge about God's biblical demand on us to care for nature.*

*1.2 - Sometimes we learn things that are painful to know. But if we have the courage to keep our hearts open, and learn even more, we can also discover what a big difference our actions can make. Today we're going to learn some of these hard facts and we're going to start to think about what we can do about them.*

## Think (23 min)

### Story of Stuff Video

#### Prep: Set up Story of Stuff video.

Instructions:

1. Invite students to take out their cell phone if they have one.
2. Ask them:



- *Where did this phone come from?*
- *Where did the materials come from? What part of nature? Where in the world?*
- *Where was the phone manufactured?*
- *What steps did it go through to get to their hands right now?*

3. Tell students that you're going to watch a video called *The Story of Stuff*. Ask for a show of hands if anybody has already seen it.

*Most of us don't really have a clue where our stuff came from. We take for granted the fact that it just magically shows up on the shelf at a store when we want it, we use it for as long as we like and then just toss it in the garbage when we're done.*



*The video tells us the whole story of your Stuff. It was made by Annie Leonard, a woman who spent almost 20 years digging to get the answers to these questions. She's like a private investigator who followed that our Stuff from its cradle to its grave and discovered a secret life most of us could never imagine. The one it had before it got to the store and the one it has after we throw it away. She did this so we can see the truth about all the hidden costs of our Stuff.*

4. Hand out paper and pens for students to take notes.
5. Tell students the film is about 20 min. long. They will be watching it in silence. Notice whatever thoughts and feelings they have while watching. They'll have a chance to talk about them afterwards.
6. Watch *The Story of Stuff*.

## Engage (10 min)



### TRY THIS

#### Facilitation Tip:

Some students won't have any problem with the message of the film. Others might. It's natural for students to have resistance to and feel threatened by the message in the film. For any normal teenager, their material possessions are a source of identity and status. Many won't let anybody tell them that it's a problem without putting up a fight. It's important to welcome the resistance and show that it reflects legitimate feelings. Show that you understand their perspective and address their questions, while also guiding them to consider a new perspective. When someone asks a question, ask if other students have an answer before you provide one. Draw out responses from students whenever possible.

Here are some FAQ's and possible answers:

**Q : She's telling me it's wrong to consume anything. But we can't live without Stuff. What are we supposed to do?**

A: Annie isn't saying it's wrong to consume. She's saying the WAY we consume is hurting us and the planet. She's telling us we need to change the way we make, use, and throw away. Stuff and to stop consuming so much. She isn't against Stuff. She just wants us to cherish it, and the world, better. God understands that we need a certain amount of stuff in order to live. But God doesn't want our lifestyles to hurt other people – and that's what the film is getting at.

**Q : Is Stuff bad?**

A: Stuff isn't bad. Valuing Stuff over people and the environment is the problem. Both Annie and God understand that we need Stuff in order to live. But when we take the good Stuff that God made and turn it into poison I think we all can agree that that's bad.

**Q: Who does she think she is? Why should I listen to her? She's not a Christian?**

A: This is the same kind of comment that people made about all the prophets in the Bible – when they didn't like the prophet's message, they attacked the prophet personally. The important question is, "What do I believe in my heart of hearts about the message that the film offers?"

**Q: What am I supposed to do if I need a cell phone, then?**

A: Use your cell phone! And make it last and take care of it and don't chuck it just because a newer, hipper, faster version came out. The average life of a cell phone is 18 months. While we need to take better care of our Stuff, we also need to advocate for better designs that last longer and push electronics companies to take the toxics out of cell phones like they are doing in Europe.

**Q: I'll bet she has a cell phone. What's up with that?**

A: Of course she does. She struggles with the same challenges as everyone else. No one can pretend to be perfect, but just because it's hard to live according to our values doesn't mean that the message is wrong or that we shouldn't try.

**Q: If we stop using Stuff, doesn't the economy collapse?**

A: Figuring out how to shift away from an economy that depends on large-scale, harmful consumption to one that is more life-affirming is a long road. This is exactly why we have to start thinking about it now. If we are going to build a fair and healthy economy we have to design it that way and that takes time and effort!

**Engage (10 min)**

**Discuss the Film**

**Instructions:**

1. When the film is over everyone might need a quick stretch break. It can help release some tension to get up, stretch and shake out your arms and legs.
2. Have them sit next to their buddy from the last week and share their initial response to the video. (3 min.)
3. Back in the large group ask the discussion questions below as needed to get a conversation going:



- *What did you like about the film?*
- *What didn't you like about it?*
- *What questions did it raise for you?*
- *What do you feel when you think about changing your relationship to Stuff? What would make it easy? What would make it hard?*
- *What's the cost of not changing? To you? To the world? To your relationship with God?*

**Reflect (5 min)**

**Prep: Hand out Bible Text**

**Instructions:**

1. Read the passages Hosea 4:1-3 or Matthew 3:1-3, 7-10
2. Tell students: This passage is about John the Baptist, a powerful prophet who foretold the birth of Jesus and/or Hosea a prophet who criticized the people of Israel for their unfaithfulness. His message was a hard and challenging one.
3. Have students reflect on the following questions:



- *How do you think the people of his time felt about his message?*
- *How do you think this relates to Annie and her message?*
- *What makes it possible to stay open when we hear challenging information about ourselves and our world?*

## Inspire (1 min)

Let students know:

### SAY THIS

*Since Annie doesn't tell us how to fix our broken system, it's easy to get discouraged after seeing the film. But there are a lot of things we can do to make a difference. We can change our individual lifestyles and help change the way our schools and church deal with consumption. We can take action in our communities and we can work to change the larger systems at a national or even global level. In the next few weeks you will have lots of opportunities to explore different kinds of actions you can take that will help make a difference.*

*In addition, each week we'll read about a young person who responded to the bad news by doing something extraordinary on behalf of Creation. Let these stories inspire you.*

Invite students to take turns reading the story – one paragraph each

### Ivan Stiefel, Taking a Stand on Spring Break Mullica Hill, NJ Age 22

### READ ALOUD

*1.3 - Wanting to spend his vacation in service of something more important than a party, Ivan organized a spring break solidarity trip with communities in Appalachia known as West Virginia Mountain Justice Spring Break, MJSB. The program focused on working with West Virginia communities affected by the unjust practices of the coal industry. Ivan and the MJSB team spent the week fighting for a safer school for the students of Marshfork Elementary which was dangerously close to a coal silo and the toxic mess that contains. While in West Virginia, the coal mine boards released plans to open a second coal silo right next to the Marshfork Elementary.*

*1.4 - Feeling the urgency of the moment, Ivan and fellow activists finished the week with a sit-in at the Governors' office. While 13 people were arrested no one was charged. Inspired by the need to tell more people about what was happening in Appalachia, the following year Ivan spearheaded two trips to coal country for MJSB: one to Wise County, Virginia and one to Meigs County, Ohio to participate in protests and community service projects centered around the abuses of the coal industry. In his own words, Ivan describes the work of MJSB as helping to further "the movement for environmental justice, climate justice and a just transition away from coal." It all started with an idea for how to spend Spring Break.*

## Enact (5 min)

**Prep: Hand out Action Plan sheet and Action Plan Instructions.**

### **Instructions:**

Ask students to pull out their Action Plan Instruction Sheets and review the instructions from the previous session:

### **Action Plan Instruction Sheet**

Read and think about the actions:

- Which actions would you like to do?
- Which seem like you could do them?
- Which seem like fun?
- Which seem as if they will really make a difference?

Decide which actions to take.

- Decide which actions you will do with your buddy and which you will do by yourself.

Remember to:

- Show your parent(s)/guardian(s) your action plan when you get home and ask them to support you. Think of what support you want from them. Ask them how they want to support you.
- Check in with your buddy at least one time this week.
- You can change your action plans.
- You can catch up on any unfinished actions at anytime.
- Take pictures or document what you do so you can share it!

## Exit (5 min)

### Remember:

- Bring an object – t-shirt, electronic gadget, jewelry, book, or cosmetic to the next session.

### Closing Activity

#### Option 1 - Love thy neighbor while resources shrink

**Prep: Have music that's easy to control. Set up chairs in a circle with room to move around them.**

This is a game of musical chairs but in this version nobody is ever "out." Instead of leaving the game, a chair is removed and when the music stops you have to share a chair with someone. You end up with everybody in one chair on top of each other. Once the activity is over, tell students to tag one person. The first person you touch or who touches you (whichever happens first) is your new buddy for the week.

#### Option 2: We're in it together

Have everybody mix up and find a random place in the room facing in any direction. Then reaching out each hand find another hand to hold. Then, closing their eyes, see if they can find their way to forming a circle. Once they have, have them go around the circle and each person say one thing they are taking with them from this session with that they didn't have when they came.

### Blessing



*Bless us in the week ahead, and help us to absorb the lessons we have learned today and to support each other in changing our lives. In Jesus' name, AMEN.*

#### WE WANNA KNOW...

Congratulations on completing Session 2! How did it go? How much time did the exercises actually take? What worked? What didn't? What do you think would work better?

Let us know at: [www.storyofstuff.org/teach.php](http://www.storyofstuff.org/teach.php)

# Biblical Texts

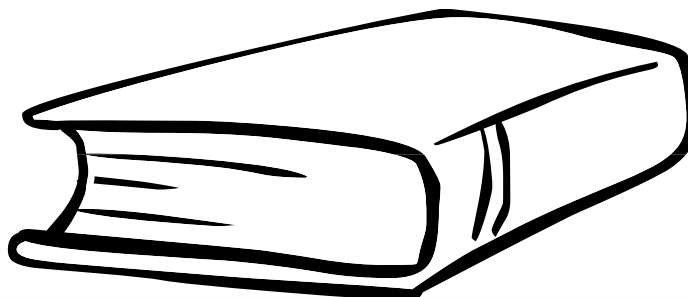
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therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.





# Session 2: Readings

1.1 -Last session we opened our hearts to Creation and to each other. But it's not just about our hearts. To protect the environment effectively we also have to use our minds. We have to educate ourselves about the state of the planet and where it will be heading in the very near future if we do nothing about it. We need knowledge about what we can do and which actions will make the biggest difference. And we have to have knowledge about God's biblical demand on us to care for nature.

1.2 - Sometimes we learn things that are painful to know. But if we have the courage to keep our hearts open, and learn even more, we can also discover what a big difference our actions can make. Today we're going to learn some of these hard facts and we're going to start to think about what we can do about them."

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# Session 2: Action Plan

## Create

- Imagine the past - Choose a favorite shopping place and either envision or research what natural landscape was there before the store was built. Draw or find a picture of it. (2 pts)

## Communicate

- Share the news - Talk to at least three people this week about what you learned in *The Story of Stuff* and maybe even encourage them to watch the film. (2 pts)
- Face this! - Post an interesting fact, article or link that talks about one of the issues in the film on your Facebook page. (1 pt)

## Learn

- More stories - Check out [www.storyofstuff.org](http://www.storyofstuff.org) and watch one of the other films the Story of Stuff team has made or watch *The Story of Stuff* again from a new perspective. (1 pt)
- Network - Take a look at [Wiserearth.org](http://Wiserearth.org) to look up organizations in your area doing this work. Make a list of the top three organizations that look the most interesting to you and explain what they do. Check out: [www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org). (2 pts)

## Have Insights

- Breakthroughs - Think of an example of a time when you or somebody you know learned a hard lesson and came through it...changed a habit, became a better person. Write about it in your journal. (1 pt)
- Personal inventory -When you get home, look at all the stuff you have. On a sheet of paper, make a list of three categories: What you need, what you like, and what you don't use. Make a list of the stuff you own for each category. If it were all in one place, how much do you think it would weigh? If you could only take whatever would fit into a backpack with you, what would you take? (3 pts.)

## Be a Leader

### With peers

- Take a hike - Skip the movies this coming weekend and coordinate a local hike with friends to get out into God's creation and really soak it in! Its free, its gorgeous and nothing inspires stewardship for the earth like a little time in nature. (2 pts)

### At home

- Have a Garage Sale - Talk to your parents and set a date to host a garage sale or donate the profits to a local organization of choice or to your Church. You'll not only reduce the amount of stuff in circulation, but you'll also raise money for a good cause. (3 pts)

## Session 2: Action Plan Cont.

### Be a leader

At school

- Show up – Attend a meeting for a club or organization at your high school that's getting involved in your community or working to protect the environment. Working together not only lightens the load, it makes the work more fun. Looking for inspiration? Check out: [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org) (2 pts)
- Start a club – No environmental club at your high school? Start one! (3 pts)

In the neighborhood

- Block party - Set a date and recruit neighbors for a block-wide yard sale. Not only will you reduce the amount of stuff in circulation, but you can raise money for a good cause and its more fun to do things with friends and neighbors. (3 pts)

In the congregation

- Brainstorm - Brainstorm a list of different ways to reduce the stuff in your congregation. (1 pts)
- Stuff swap - Talk with the church organizers and set a date for a congregation wide Stuff Swap (3 pts)

### Tips and Tools...

Need ideas for where to get involved and how to start, check out the list of "10 Little and Big Things You Can Do" on the Story of Stuff website:

<http://www.storyofstuff.org/anotherway.php>

Remember to take pictures of anything you did to share and put on the mural.

Total # of Points \_\_\_\_\_