

Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Gospel Choir believe that Consumerism is overwhelming our lives. The corporations want us to have experiences only through their products.

'The Immediate Life: Mobilizing Communities Towards an Ecologically Sustainable Future' is a project that uses the film *What Would Jesus Buy?* as a tool for engaging individuals and communities in a dialogue about the relationship between consumerism and the environment with the ultimate goal of developing a channel for ongoing communication between those groups. Simultaneously a massive effort was made to establish a strong presence in the commercial media throughout the Christmas season, jumpstarting an altogether different but equally important conversation about consumerism, the environment, and the viability of a retail economy.



Beginning in Fall 2008, members of The Immediate Life, also known as the Church of Life After Shopping, reached out to over 100 individuals who had expressed an interest in hosting a screening of DVD, inviting them to screen the DVD in their homes, community centers, churches, etc. and involve their family and friends in a related conversation. The DVDs were mailed with extensive packets that included information about how big box chain stores take a toll on our environment, links to alternative resources for an ecologically sustainable future and movements across the US, conversation talking points, facts about Wal-Mart and other big box chain stores, and more.

The exchange between the Church and the DVD recipients described a portrait of ethically and ecologically motivated individuals, many of whom are isolated within their own communities, and who are actively seeking support and tools to enact change in their surrounds. One individual writes:

“My little town of a couple thousand just put in a Wal-Mart this last year. I refuse to shop there, but the community is mostly enthralled. Wal-Mart had to do some things that were environmentally responsible to get the OK to build (such as installing parking lot lights that only throw light downward, minimizing light pollution, building a walking trail, etc), but it's still a Wal-Mart! We NEED more awareness in our community. I am the marketing chair of my (very small) church. I saw WWJB in the theatre on Christmas Eve last year and have wanted to share it with my Unity church all year--I thought I would host a movie night, but was admittedly a little nervous of offending. Plus I work most Friday nights, which is when we hold movie nights. The packet would give me an extra boost for getting the message across. Also, I would advertise it in the local paper in hopes of getting other community members to come.”

Another, who was already organizing screenings, was excited to receive the Outreach packet:

“I am thrilled to have received your email regarding the Outreach program for screening WWJB? this holiday season, and I would be honored to host several screenings in my community. I had already made arrangements at the middle school where I teach in Auburn, Maine to screen the movie for staff after school during the last week of November. In addition, I will also be showing the DVD this year to my entire family on Thanksgiving night, and am considering contacting my local university (The University of Southern Maine in Portland) to set up a screening there before Christmas as well. Although I have already seen the movie last year in the theater and recently purchased the DVD, I would greatly appreciate on Outreach Packet to facilitate conversation and provide information on conscious consumption to accompany the viewing of the film.”

Others described how watching the film changed the way they think about consumption on a day-today level:

“This movie changed my life. I have always felt that Christmas is about more than things, but it's hard to fully recognize how deep we've fallen until you see the full scope of how unhealthy, destructive, and sad this ritual of conspicuous consumption has become. I will never go back to "celebrating" (i.e. stressing, shopping, and spending) Christmas the same way again.”

And another: “This past Sunday a group of us were eating together when one of our friends excitedly announced that a Kohl's department store is being built in Granite City, where she lives. I didn't even have time to respond before Heather (who also lives in G.C.) said, "I like Kohl's, but after watching "What Would Jesus Buy" I started checking the tags on their clothing. And sure enough, it's all made in places like Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India. I really don't like to think my clothes are

being produced by people who are being paid almost nothing."

"I can tell you that I watched the film with my parents on Christmas day and it was one of the coolest experiences I have had with them. We have gone from Christmases when I was younger with a room full of presents to modest and thoughtful Christmas giving in the past few years My Dad who enjoys the convenience of a 24 hour Wal-Mart near our house remarked that "We really need to stop going to Wal-Mart because its just the right thing to do" Hadn't I been telling him that for years? It really was your movie that made the difference!"

The Church has maintained correspondence with these individuals, 14 of who have joined the Church as "Heralds" who regularly report to the Church about the state of their community and share on the ground experiences, obstacles and successes. Some of these Heralds are also present on the forum online at www.revilly.com, relating their experiences in order to connect and strengthen community networks around the world.

As these conversations raged in living rooms and around the kitchen table Reverend Billy and The Church of Life After Shopping came into the homes of "Herald" families and their communities through national media appearances between "Buy Nothing Day" and Christmas Day. As evidence mounted that this year's shopping season was becoming the "Shopocalypse" that our project had predicted -- Reverend Billy (and sometimes the choir) made media appearances on Fox Business News, CBS news with Katie Couric, Geraldo, ABC Nightline, CNN Morning Show, WNYC, Democracy Now, and West Coast Live. The Church also received media hits in The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Newsweek, San Francisco Chronicle. Usually, clips from "What Would Jesus Buy?" were broadcast as intro to interviews.

This year, the consumer stampedes on Black Friday at the beginning of *What Would Jesus Buy?* seemed eerily predictive of the death of Jdimytai Damour at the front doors of Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, Long Island. Reverend Billy and The Choir went to the suburban wasteland of the "Green Acres" mall and sang with Jdimytai's co-workers there. Their interviews and performances for the next month would all be informed by the tragedy. Their challenge to connect the cruelty and addiction made so vivid by the stampede to the psychic distortions of Consumerism that leaves people so divorced from the earth.

The Immediate Life reaches people as many ways as they can, in 2008 they created 1 full length record- *The Shopocalypse*, 8 episodes of *The Last Televangelist*, 5 music videos, 1 new website, more than 50 stage performances,

dozens of public events, 1 calendar and the DVD of *What Would Jesus Buy*.

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Our new website
www.revilly.com

Our full length record
<http://www.revilly.com/work/music>

The Calendar for our Parks for People campaign
<http://www.revilly.com/participate/resources/starter-kits/parks-for-people-247-calendar>

Wonderful music videos
<http://www.revilly.com/work/the-first-church-of-the-last-televangelist/push-back-music-video>

<http://www.revilly.com/work/the-first-church-of-the-last-televangelist/clip-cronies-in-the-boardroom-music-video>

4 of our 8 new 30-minute television shows *The Last Televangelist*

The Temple
<http://blip.tv/file/1825383> (mpeg)
<http://pnong.blip.tv/#1834860> (flash)

Freak-a-lujah
<http://blip.tv/file/1838248> (mpeg)
<http://pnong.blip.tv/#1846572> (flash)

Bye,Bye Buying
<http://blip.tv/file/1838248> (mpeg)
<http://pnong.blip.tv/#1847741> (flash)

The Wall
<http://blip.tv/file/1834317> (mpeg)
<http://pnong.blip.tv/#1843807> (flash)

MEDIA clips

<http://www.revbilly.com/press/2008/11/reverend-billy-on-cnn-post-bnd-figuring-out-christmas>

<http://www.revbilly.com/press/2008/12/meet-the-bloggers-rev-billy-and-savitri-d>

much more at

www.revbilly.com/press

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www.revbilly.com