

Enough

and Other Magic Words to Transform Your Life

by David W. Jones

Chapter One

I can't get no satisfaction.
Mick Jagger

The Problem

I like stuff.

When we moved in our current home, with more stuff than we could fit into the house, a lot of it went to the attic. At the time I told my wife Carrie, "If we don't use this stuff in the first year, let's get rid of it." She agreed. That was ten years ago. It's still there, plus a lot more, with added floor space. We have a hard time getting rid of our stuff. Our neighbors aren't much different. Drive around our subdivision and you'll see cars in driveways because garages are all full of stuff.

My neighbors and I are not alone in our acquisition and collection of stuff, our hoarding is no neighborhood peculiarity. According to George Carlin, it's our national pastime...

...that's what this country is all about. Tryin' to get more stuff. Stuff you don't want, stuff you don't need, stuff that's poorly made, stuff that's overpriced. Even stuff you can't afford! Gotta keep on gettin' more stuff. Otherwise someone else might wind up with more stuff. Can't let that happen. Gotta have the most stuff...

So now you got a houseful of stuff. And, even though you might like your house, you gotta move. Gotta get a bigger house. Why? Too much stuff! And that means you gotta move all your stuff. Or maybe, put some of your stuff in storage. Storage! Imagine that. There's a whole industry based on keepin' an eye on other people's stuff.

Or maybe you could sell some of your stuff. Have a yard sale, have a garage sale! Some people drive around all weekend just lookin' for garage sales. They don't have enough of their own stuff, they wanna buy other people's stuff.¹

Carlin is right. We love stuff. When we want more stuff, we go looking for it, searching for it, shopping. Apparently it's part of our nature.

Read the following from the Bible's first book, the book of Genesis, third chapter, the story of Adam and Eve. Notice how their story is not just the tale of two people long ago but a chronicle of our lives today with insight as timely as George Carlin's commentary.

¹ George Carlin, *Brain Droppings*, p. 38

The Text

Genesis 3: ⁶*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.*

Have you ever considered what Adam and Eve were doing when they got into so much trouble? As I read the story, they were shopping. The forbidden fruit was not scattered throughout the garden, not in many places, not in multiple locations, but one place, one site, one location and one location only. Perhaps they just came upon it, “Oh, look, the forbidden fruit...” or, perhaps, they were looking for something, searching, shopping. Somewhere in their dissatisfaction they thought, “If only we had something more...”

Today, if we want *more*, we don’t have to wander through a garden, we can go wander through a mall. The mall is a relatively new innovation. Historically, the order went like this: you had a need; you figured out what you wanted to meet the need; you figured out how to pay for it; then you shopped for the right one; and then, and only then, you bought it. Not any more, not with malls and credit cards, for malls aren’t about shopping for what you need, malls exist to help you find what you want regardless of need. Now the order is: shop, figure out what you want that you didn’t know you wanted before, charge it, get it, and later, figure out how to pay for it. Because shopping isn’t about need and instead is about some amorphous unperceived want, some undefined emptiness, if what we buy now doesn’t fill it, if what we buy gives us no lasting satisfaction, we buy something else. And now it’s even simpler, instead of going to the mall, you don’t even have to leave your home to search for what you must have that you didn’t even know you wanted – you can search online.

William Sloan Coffin described our problem this way,

There are people and things in this world, and people are to be loved and things are to be used. And it is increasingly important that we love people and use things, for there is so much in our gadget minded, consumer-oriented society that is encouraging us to love things and use people.

As I read and re-read the story of Adam and Eve, I want to scream out, “You’re in Eden! Leave the damned apple alone. Don’t you have enough? Why do you want *more*?” Yet, every time I read it, they don’t seem to hear me. They chase their *more*, their must-have, their desire above other desires, the want they perceive as need, and then all hell breaks loose. For whatever reason, whatever dissatisfaction they perceived, they had to have *more*. Once they saw the fruit, once it appeared *good* to them and was a *delight* to their eyes, they were sure that life with the forbidden fruit was going to be better than life without it, and life without it less than life with it.

Their problems came, simply because they knew *more* and only *more*. What they needed was another word, a magic word...



enough

The Text Revisited

What if Adam and Eve had known the simple word *enough* and used it at the base of the tree of trouble? Their story would have been much different, much simpler, less painful, something like this... (I've left the original passage from Genesis in italics.)

Genesis 3: *the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise... but then she said to herself, "What are you thinking? You live in a beautiful garden. This is paradise. You have everything you need to be happy right here. You have enough."*

She talked with Adam. They contemplated what they needed and what they had. Adam affirmed, "Yes, we have *enough*."

They said it together, "Yes, we have *enough*."

And then the two of them walked away, happy together.

The Transformation

If Adam and Eve had known *enough*, and used it, their lives, their situation, and their relationships all would have been better. But they didn't. However, just because they didn't know *enough*, doesn't mean that you can't. The magic of *enough* is easily accessible. This I know, for I know people who use *enough* often to transform their lives and the lives of their families. For example, my friend Jimmie Manning...

Jimmie has *ENOUGH* as a customized license plate. He was asked, "Jimmie, would you still have that license plate if someone gave you a new Mercedes?" "Nope," he replied, "then I'd get a plate that says, *More than Enough*."

Jimmie had the plate made after reading *Life is So Good!*, the biography of George Dawson, a man who signed his name with an X until age 98. At 98 George learned to read and write.

George's biographer asked him, "George, when you think of life, do you see the glass as half full or half empty?"

"I don't see it as half full or half empty," George replied.

"Then how do you see it?" the biographer asked.

"It is *enough*," George replied. "*Enough*."

Jimmie loves the book and the philosophy. Jimmie figures if George Dawson, a man who grew up black in one of the toughest times in a country's history for a minority, and a man who was illiterate until 98 could look at life and say, "It is *enough*." If this man could see life as neither half full or half empty, if he could look at life and claim *enough*, then so could he.

For my friend Jimmie, *enough* hasn't just been an attitude, but a lifestyle – and a diet plan. Jimmie travels a lot for work, so he eats out a lot. Eating out usually means an easy road to gaining weight. Jimmie used the power of *enough* to limit what he ate. Instead of eating what he could, or what would make him feel good, he just ate what he needed at each meal. The *Enough* Diet Plan took forty-two pounds off Jimmie even while he was still traveling. *Enough* changed Jimmie's life. It can change yours.

Consider the king in this next story adapted from Heather Forrest's collection *Wisdom Tales*...

Once there was a prince who was so sad, his eyes seemed full of sadness and tears. The king was concerned about his son. He got cooks to prepare the best dishes, toymakers to make the best toys, and teachers to share their most stimulating ideas, but to no avail. No gift or treasure could free the prince from his sadness.

The king called his advisors who offered this solution, "For the prince to be happy, you must dress him in the shirt of a truly happy man. Then he will be cured of all his sorrow."

So the king set out on a journey to find a truly happy man.

He went through the village to the church. The priest always seemed to him to be a happy man. "Your, majesty," the priest said, "to what do I owe this honor?"

The king said, "You are known as a good and holy man. I would like to know, would you accept the position of bishop should it come to you?"

"Certainly," replied the priest.

"Never mind," the king said and left disappointed. If the priest were truly happy, he wouldn't want to be bishop.

The king went to another kingdom and visited another monarch. "My friend," asked the king, "are you happy?"

"Most of the time, but not always, there are many nights I am restless because I am worry about losing all that I have worked so hard to gain."

The king left for he knew that this man's shirt would not do.

On his way back to his own kingdom, he happened to be riding by a farm. He heard singing. He stopped his carriage and followed the sound of the song. There he found a poor farmer, singing at the top of his lungs. The farmer looked up to see the king approaching and said, "Good day, sir!"

"Good day to you," said the king. "You seem so happy today."

"I am happy every day for I am blessed with a wonderful life."

The king said, "Come with me to the castle. You will be surrounded with luxury and never want for anything again."

"Thank you your majesty, but I would not give up my life for all the castles in the world."

The king could not contain his joy. "My son is saved! All I need do is take this man's shirt back to the castle with me!"

*It was then the king looked and realized... the man wasn't wearing a shirt.*²

The king wanted to be happy, and he wanted his son to be happy. Though he searched far and wide, he couldn't find any thing or person that could transform his son from despair to delight, or give peace to his own anxiety. Though sent in search of a shirt, he discovered a secret. Neither he nor his son needed the shirt of a truly happy man. They didn't need a shirt at all. The power wasn't outside the castle or within its walls. The power was, however, in his son and in him. They each had the power to create their own kingdoms of their lives. Power so simple anyone can learn.

Kevin Salwen picked up his fourteen year old daughter, Hannah, from a slumber party and was driving her home. At a red light, Hannah looked out their windows and saw a homeless man on the sidewalk holding up a sign asking for money to buy food. On the other side of the car, in the lane next to them, Hannah saw a black Mercedes.

She looked from the Mercedes, back to the homeless man, and from the homeless man back again to the Mercedes. Then she said to her father, "If that guy didn't have such a nice car, then that guy could have a nice meal."

It made sense to her. A less expensive car for one man could keep another off the street. Hannah was moved. She challenged her family.

"What do you want to do?" asked Hannah's mother. "Sell our house?"

Her mother was joking. Hannah wasn't. Hannah thought selling the house was a great idea. They could trade their house in for a less expensive one, half the size and half the expense, and donate the difference to charity. And that's what they did.

They contributed half the sale of their house to a non-profit called *The Hunger Project* where the money has gone to impact the lives of thousands in a positive way.

Hannah and her father teamed up to write a book about the project, *The Power of Half*. Hannah told *The New York Times*, "No one expects anyone to sell a house. That's kind of a ridiculous thing to do. For us, the house was just something we could live without. It was too big for us. Everyone has too much of something, whether it's time, talent or treasure. Everyone does have their own half; you just have to find it."

Though some accuse the Salwens of grandstanding, Kevin told *The Times*, "This is the most self-interested thing we have ever done. I'm thrilled that we can help others. I'm blown away by how much it has helped us."

Their charity benefited their family; they gave away wealth and found health; they found addition through subtraction; through the loss of some of their stuff, they gained additional peace of mind; for them, for all of us, that is *enough*.

In your life, like theirs, where do you need to let go of some of your wealth to find health, where have you been caught up in *more, more* and need the power of *enough*?

A simple word.

A powerful word.

Enough.

Say it now.

Enough.

Say it daily.

Enough.

² Heather Forest, *Wisdom Tales*, p.117.