

Wales: When “enough” isn’t enough

November 18, 2015

The word “enough” has been on my mind recently. It’s a burdening word here in Wales. People are plagued with an endless pursuit of this foreign, elusive goal. It’s manifested in nearly endless ways, rarely labeled with the actual word, “enough,” but always bearing its deadly symptoms.



Ryan Bowen Trendy shops and boutiques line the streets of the town where my teammate and I live. Nightclubs are scattered throughout, and alcohol is available on most corners. Countless students walk around smoothly puffing on cigarettes, nursing beers and flirting with one another. Their pursuits of acceptance and meaning—by way of being “fashionable enough,” “unique enough” or “cool enough”—are displayed everywhere. Other students are locked in libraries for endless hours to earn “high enough” grades to be “successful enough” in the future, and eventually “earn enough” money to be “acceptable enough.” It’s hauntingly tragic.

I had innocent intentions when I asked a not-yet -believing friend what he considered to be an essential fact about himself. I wasn’t trying to lead into a spiritual or faith-related conversation, which is for the best, because that’s not where it went. It did get me thinking afterwards, though. If he had turned the question back on me I’m not sure what I would have said right then, but I have a clearer idea of what I’d say now.

I am insufficient

I want the students of Bangor, and all the people of Wales, to know I am insufficient. I am lacking and inadequate. I'm not enough. And I find great peace in knowing this. An essential and unique quality of the gospel is that I come before God with nothing in my hands. I haven't come to Wales to offer them my talents or services. I've come to testify transparently of how unbelievably lacking I was and how unbelievably full I am now. I am a child of God—a son of the King—with an inheritance waiting for me. I've been given the Spirit of the living God to dwell inside of me, so I might daily die and know what it is to be free.

There is freedom in not being enough. My future and my present hope do not rest on the style of my clothes, quality of my grades, fervency of my prayers, annotations in my Bible, or my ability to communicate God's work and presence in my life to others. Thank goodness.

Speaking out of joy, not duty

Understanding that my sufficiency comes from Christ's death let's me exhale. I can sit back and enjoy a rich conversation or a particularly stunning hike. I can testify of Jesus and the freedom he's bought me in all circumstances and through all actions. I intend to tell my nonbelieving friends about Christ. They'll hear, but I hope that conversation comes out of joy, not out of duty.

My friend never truly answered my question about himself. After a quick moment of thinking he mentioned something about a sports franchise and turned back to his beer. But I think he appreciated an invitation to a deeper relationship, even if he didn't take it. The offer stands, and I hope one day soon we'll get to talk about it again, and maybe he'll ask about me.

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