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Act 32: Better Threads

by Paige Colthart

Picture this: you're looking at a cheap-as-chips shirt, wondering what on earth happened to make it that cheap, and before you know it, you've gone and bought it. It happens to most of us. But today, we're getting thoughtful about our threads. What's the history behind our clothes? And what makes ethical clothing generous?

"Be under obligation to no one – the only obligation you have is to love one another..."

(Romans 13:8 GNT)

There are many things I love about working in fashion but one thing I battle with is just how unethical it can be. Visiting factories where garments are manufactured really opens your eyes to the reality of fast fashion and what it's costing our world.

I work for Ted Baker, which is known for its quality and quirkiness. The prices of our products can be quite high for your regular spender, but what I love is that we have an entire team ensuring that all products are produced ethically, called Ted's Conscience Team. It means the factory workers are paid above minimum wage, they aren't doing too much overtime and they work in a safe environment.

When we buy clothes, there's much more to think about than simply the cost to our wallets. Everything we buy has a meaning. It's a decision that can affect everything from the economy to the environment to perhaps someone's life on the other side of the world.

Working in production, I have a good idea of all the factors that contribute to the price of clothing. Some brands have 80% profit margins which means that the other 20% has to include the cost and testing of the fabric, the trims, the packing materials, the freight and then the make price. And somewhere in that 20% is the wage of the person that is making the garment for you.

If you pay £3 for a T-shirt, how much do you think the person making that T-shirt is getting paid after all the other costs have been factored in?

So perhaps next time you need a winter coat, save up and buy one that will last, from a brand that you know pays enough for their factory workers to have the quality of life they deserve. Or you can always buy second-hand at charity shops, or websites like eBay and Vinted.

Jesus taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves and, more than that, as he has loved us – sacrificially. As we know from the story of the Good Samaritan, 'neighbour' means more than just the people we live near. We have a duty to care for even those we have never met.

I've learnt it's all about supply and demand. If consumers want something, the retail world responds to that. If we demand good-quality, ethical products, the higher cost

to us can mean a lower cost to someone else's life.



I am a Production Specialist on dresses at Ted Baker. I manage the production of a garment, taking it from a sketch and liaising with suppliers in order to make it into a garment and deliver it in store on time and at the right quality.

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GREEN OPTION:

Make up a list of places you're happy to shop for clothes, and places to avoid that aren't ethically sound.



YELLOW OPTION:

Do an inventory on your clothes. Sort through them and see how many are ethically dodgy. Take anything you don't need to a charity shop.



**RED
OPTION:**

When you need something new, buy ethically instead, and get a new habit started.

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