

## **The Toolbox Course at LICC.**

### **'I wanted to make the Bible relevant'**

Jackie Girling, 45, is single and works for CWR, a Christian publishing and training organisation in Surrey. Despite often being a facilitator for courses herself, she decided to use a week of her holiday to attend a scheme run by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity.

I have, for a long time, been passionate about making the Bible relevant in contemporary culture and talking to people where they are at. So when I found that LICC was running a course teaching practical skills on just this subject, I thought it would be good to take part.

Everything fell into place for me to be able to do the course. Someone offered to support me financially, another friend provided me with accommodation in London, I was able to take time off work and I got a place on the course, which is often oversubscribed. I felt that it was the right thing for me to do.

The week was very intense. Each day for five days we would arrive at 9am and listen to lectures, participate in workshops, lead presentations, or go on assignments, and not finish before 9pm. But it was so much fun that by the end of the course we all felt at a loss - what would we do next? It had been so stimulating.

We were taught five tools for approaching contemporary culture and I have found that I am using them still, evaluating the daily choices I make. As a consumer, for example, I consider what I buy and think about who is making it and what conditions they are working in to do so. Is it biblical? Are the organisations and retailers I use ethical? I consider my role biblically in looking after the environment. I have been encouraged that, as an individual, I can make a difference.

Also, in everyday conversations, I am now aware that seemingly simple comments about soap operas, the latest bestseller, issues in politics and so on can all lead to much deeper discussions.

The course has changed my whole way of thinking. For example, during the week we were able to go to the Tate Modern. Here I would previously have viewed the pictures uncritically and if I didn't enjoy them, I would dismiss them. The course inspired me to look at art in a totally different way, opening my eyes to how the artists were expressing different worldviews.

It was great because we weren't being overly critical. Instead we were encouraged to be affirming and to celebrate what's good about our culture.

If there was a drawback to the course it was not having the opportunity to 'process' all we learnt, as we looked at so much in such a short period of time. Even some of the mealtimes were spent preparing for the next session! However, I made myself go through the material as soon as I got home which was really helpful.

Having so enjoyed the stimulation of this week, I decided to take up an Open University course. I'm really thriving on the study and find that my mind is so much sharper and I have become much more organised in my life. God has given us our thinking skills and going on the LICC course has opened up a whole new area for me.

### Course details

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London W1G 0DQ Tel: 020 7399 9555 <http://www.licc.org.uk/toolbox>

Jackie Girling was interviewed by Catherine Lerner, a freelance journalist based in Suffolk. This article was published in *Woman Alive*, and is reproduced with kind permission.