

The logo for Tearfund, featuring the word "tearfund" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white circular shape.

tearfund

CHURCH MISSION

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Modern Slavery

Biblical studies on slavery and exploitation

THIRD EDITION

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Introduction

We believe we are called to help protect the vulnerable from exploitation. This booklet is an introduction to the issues of modern slavery and exploitation around the world and an overview of Tearfund's work in this field.

At Tearfund, we are committed to fighting against slavery and exploitation. As history attests, it's not a fight we can wage alone; to combat modern slavery, we need a movement.

Ultimately we need you to stand with us, and we want to stand with you in this fight against one of the most dehumanising evils ever to grip the planet. Before that can happen, everyone needs to know what we're dealing with.

This booklet is a basic introduction to the issue of modern slavery and exploitation. By working through this introductory study, you will learn about the history of slavery and what forms of modern slavery and exploitation exist today. You will also learn what Tearfund is doing to address modern slavery and exploitation, the part our amazing partners play in combatting it and what your response to the issue might look like.

How to use Church Mission and Modern Slavery

This study can be used by both individuals and small groups. If you choose to use it in a group setting, we'd encourage you to study a chapter of the booklet each time you meet.

After you have finished the material in the booklet, you might like to continue to meet to reflect on what you have learned and what actions individuals in your group have taken.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Tips for group use

- Have group members read the appropriate study before the meeting so that the group can focus on the discussion questions.
- Pay attention to the Bible references throughout the study. These will be great conversation starters on the connection between the Bible and the topic of the study.
- Close by spending time in prayer together. You can use the suggested prayer points and anything else that might come up for you.
- Take your time. Modern slavery is a serious and upsetting issue. If members of your group are struggling to process the information, take more time with each study.

The Importance of Responding

The last study challenges us to think about things we can do to address modern slavery. We would encourage you to spend some dedicated time with this and to take it very seriously.

As you'll find out, this issue connects with all of us in ways we may not have considered. We each have an opportunity to do something about it and help bring freedom to the lives of others. That's no small thing. You have an opportunity to be an agent of freedom.

Join us in the fight to deliver that freedom to those who so desperately need it.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. – Luke 4:18-19

CHAPTER 1

The History of Slavery

Photo: British Library

Slavery through history

Slavery is something that happened a long time ago—right?

We've heard about it in history classes and seen it in the movies. We applaud the work of old-time heroes like William Wilberforce in England and Abraham Lincoln in America, both of whom fought for the freedom of slaves. Let's take an in-depth look at the history of slavery.

The history of slavery is a long one that has seen many changes over time. In fact, slavery predates human records and was institutionalised in cultures around the world from the earliest days of humanity.

Key verse: Galatians 3:28

Discuss:

1. What do you already know about slavery in the past?
2. Make a list of the things slaves have been used for in history.

As soon as humans began forming civilisations, they also began the practice of slavery. Slaves were most commonly obtained as the result of war when one civilisation conquered another.

An early example of slavery is recorded in the Bible. In Exodus 1, the Israelites were being held as slaves in Egypt and forced to work in poor conditions. Generations later, the people of Israel were exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 25). We will talk more about those examples later in the study. Other ancient civilisations also used slaves, including the Greeks in Sparta and Athens who used slaves to work the land or mines.

The Bible also records another significant era of slavery—the Roman Empire. After Jesus’ time on earth, Jerusalem was captured by the Roman army and many Jews were sold as slaves. Slavery declined after this but increased again during the late Middle Ages in Europe after the Black Death caused a severe labour shortage. It was also common in Russia and Arab civilisations.

A new and disastrous era of slavery began when Portuguese traders arrived in West Africa in the 15th century. This was the beginning of the transatlantic trading patterns of buying and selling Africans for economic gains.

Our modern understandings of slavery stem specifically from the evolution of this era of the slave trade, which grew into the transatlantic slave trade.

Transatlantic Slave Trade

The most well-known slave-trading system was the transatlantic slave trade.

This trade was brutal and constituted a mass migration, by kidnap, of Africans into other nations. Records show that the total number of African slaves who were taken from their homeland and moved to other nations between the 16th and 19th century was about 13 million. The numbers who survived the initial transportation and were delivered to destination ports is estimated to be 11.3 million.

The transportation and trading of slaves was inhumane, and many victims died under poor conditions. Below is an image of the British slave ship ‘Brookes’. Look at how tightly they were packed in.

All of those captured, transported and sold, or who died along the way, were someone’s son, daughter, husband, wife, father, mother, uncle, aunt or cousin. They were people who loved and were loved. They were torn from their homes and subjected to the whims of others with no regard for the dignity of their humanity. They were seen as commodities. But, of course, human beings are not commodities. We are not products to be used and abused. We are beings created in the image of God. We were created to love and be

loved. This is true for all people regardless of ethnicity or any other factors that may differentiate and divide us.

An economy built on slaves

The United States of America has a legacy as a significant perpetrator of the slave trade, with some of the cruellest slavery practices in history. From the 1600s, the burgeoning economies of the southern states in America were heavily reliant on the free labour of slaves from the transatlantic trade.

Slaves worked on sugar cane, tobacco and cotton plantations to increase production and were used to run the households of the landowners. Conditions were horrendous, and the work was incredibly hard.

While slaves worked, they were often supervised by a ‘driver’ or ‘overseer’. These individuals often inflicted great suffering on the slaves. Whipping, beating, branding and sexual abuse were common punishments inflicted on slaves. As well as this, slaves were overworked, had poor living conditions and minimal access to education and medical care.

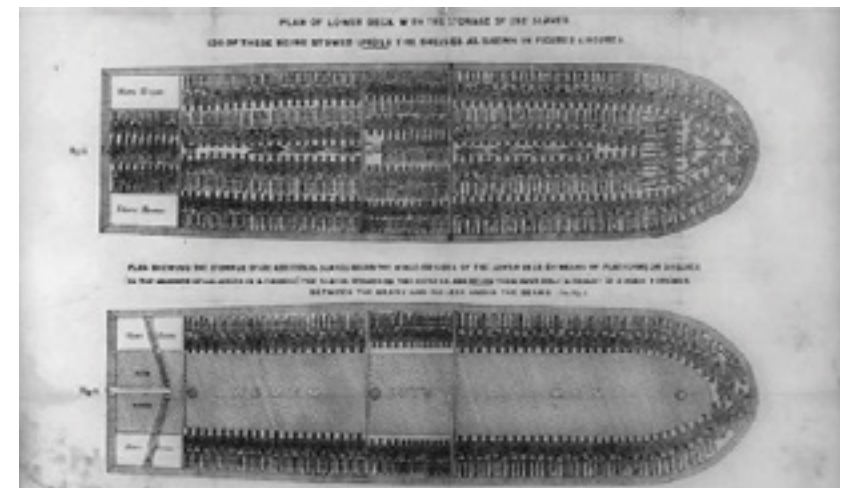


Diagram of a slave ship showing the sardine-like conditions of the people on board.

The world wakes up

In 1807, thanks to the work of William Wilberforce and other abolitionists, the British Parliament abolished the slave trade throughout the British Empire.

Although the slave trade was abolished at this time, it wasn't until 1838 that slavery itself was legally abolished. Thankfully, concerned citizens recognised the inhumanity of the sanctioned trade and of slavery itself. The American Civil War stemmed from the desire of the northern states to abolish the practice of slavery that was most common in southern states. It wasn't entirely a moral issue though as economic and political control of the system were also central issues. As we know, the result of this war was the start of the post-slavery era in America, beginning with abolition via the 13th Amendment. However, the battle was not over. The abolitionist movement worked for decades to bring the trading and keeping of slaves to an end. By the end of the 19th century, the legal slave trade had ended around the globe.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. – Article 4

Much later, on the 10th of December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established by the United Nations General Assembly. All member nations recognised Article 4 which states that: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”

Church with a passion

Significantly, the church was a key component of the fight against the historical slave trade—twice.

It was at the heart of the abolition push in England and the USA. William Wilberforce was a man of faith who was encouraged and

inspired by people like John Wesley. In the United States, the church also played a significant role in the movement to set slaves free. Less well-known, and centuries before this, Christianity was a key driver to end slavery towards the end of the Roman Empire.

**There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
– Galatians 3:28**

People have used the Bible to justify slavery (we will address this in a later chapter), but Christianity has always had, at its heart, the belief that all people are made in the image of God and so deserve freedom and dignity. This belief fuelled the historic fight against the slave trade, and now, we have an opportunity to take our place alongside our historical brothers and sisters of faith to do the same. It was their fight, and we can make it our fight with the catch cry of ‘freedom’ fuelling our efforts.

(Movie suggestion: Watch *Amazing Grace* (2006), the story of William Wilberforce and the fight to stop the transatlantic slave trade.)

Discuss:

1. Why do you think the slave trade was seen as acceptable for so long?
2. How did the culture change to abolish slavery?
3. What were the implications of the verse above (Galatians 3:28) for the behaviour of the early church?

Prayer Points

- Give thanks to God for the historical abolition of the slave trade.
- Give thanks to God for the part faithful Christians played in the fight against slavery.
- Pray that God would inspire his church now to be strong and take up the fight against modern slavery.

CHAPTER 2

What is Modern Slavery?

Photo: Nikki Denholm

The Crime is Still With Us

To understand an issue, a common understanding of the issue must exist. In this chapter, we look at how modern slavery and exploitation are defined and what forms they take.

Legal frameworks to understand and tackle slavery are extremely important because, although slavery has been made illegal, it has not stopped.

Key verses: Genesis 37 – 50

Unfortunately, slavery has become worse in recent years. It is once again a global problem of mammoth proportions that requires a comprehensive response.

It is estimated that there are around 40 million people trapped in some form of slavery today. This means they are either trapped in forced labour or extreme exploitation. It is an issue that impacts every country in the world. Of those 40.3 million, 24.9 million people are trapped in forced labour, and 4.8 million of these are in forced sexual exploitation. Forced labour includes working in rock quarries, garment factories and domestic servitude and includes sexual exploitation. Children are also in forced labour. The rest of the 40 million people (15.4m) are those in forced marriages; this includes children.

Discuss:

1. How would you define slavery?
2. How important do you think definitions might be? Why?
3. Why do you think it might be important for all countries to agree on definitions and law around this issue?
4. Modern slavery is an untold story and an enormous blight on our world. Share in the group what you know about this.

Defining Human Trafficking and Slavery

It is important to understand the difference between slavery and trafficking because these two things often get mixed up and wrong statistics circulate as a result.

Modern slavery is being forced to work very hard without proper remuneration or appreciation and usually unable to escape. Trafficking is the means by which many people, but not all, end up in slavery. Lots of people are caught in debt bondage and end up in slavery and exploitation in their own community. These people are not, technically, trafficked. The understanding of human trafficking agreed globally by the UN involves the recruitment, trading (buying and selling) and movement of people using threat, force, or other forms of coercion. It can happen through abduction, fraud, and deception. It involves the abuse of power. It is always done to exploit and, therefore, enslave the victim.

How Can This Happen to People?

In the world that many of us experience, it can be hard to understand how people can be trafficked in the first place. Why would people sell their children, for instance? Or why would someone simply go with someone else because they're promised work? How could the lies be so easily believed?

Poverty leaves people vulnerable to being exploited. Traffickers prey on vulnerable people, such as families who can't afford to provide for all their children and girls and boys who have had to leave school to find work. A shocking number of stories from our partners follow the same pattern: a young, poor, uneducated person is offered a lucrative job in another province or country. But they arrive to find themselves trapped in exploitative conditions.

Poverty causes the debt that individuals or families can't get out of. It makes people susceptible to lies about jobs for themselves or family members, only to find themselves trapped in slavery. The same desperation to get out of debt can cause parents to be willing to sell a child. The latter is one of the most difficult problems to understand.

Poverty leaves people vulnerable to exploitation.



Photo: Nikki Denholm

Sadly, when faced with large families and desperate circumstances, it is not uncommon for parents to sell one child to feed the rest. Alternatively, parents may send a child with traffickers, with the promise that the child will have a better life than what the parents could provide. Often, however, the promises are a lie and their children are never seen again.

Wars and disasters create hotbeds for human traffickers to work in. In such circumstances, families are torn apart and children are disconnected from their parents, making them easy targets for traffickers. As well as this, parents lose income as a result of the disaster, making them susceptible to lies or offers of money.

Other factors that make people susceptible are unsafe or restrictive migration routes and the power structures in various communities that result in some community members being oppressed and therefore, vulnerable to the abuse of power by others.

The most vulnerable groups in communities are usually women and children, the mentally ill and the poor. Where it is easy to oppress a group, it is easy to exploit them.

Sold by relatives: Joseph's Story

By Roger Seth Tearfund UK

Like so many victims of trafficking today, Joseph was sold by his own family. The fact that the Midianite caravan was ready to buy a slave to sell in Egypt (Genesis 37:26–28) tells us that the trade in people was already happening in the region at that time.

Today, we are told, trafficking happens in every nation on earth, with many men and women involved in buying and selling fellow members of the human family.

It is Judah who proposes that, rather than kill Joseph, his brothers sell him. Judah argues his point by saying, 'Let's not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother' (Genesis 37:27), showing his confused belief that the slave trade is more acceptable than murder. Yet the shock, loss of home, torture and abuse Joseph would have

suffered as a result of being sold still caused him deep pain. Today, we often see people selling their family members, just as Joseph's brothers did. These relatives may also explain their actions in ways similar to Judah.

Vulnerable to abuse

When the Midianites reach Egypt, Joseph is bought by a man called Potiphar and his wife. This puts Joseph in the dangerous situation of being at the mercy of his master and mistress. Young men today often look to the example of Joseph, who resists the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. How different might the situation have been, however, if Joseph had been a girl and it had been Potiphar making the advances? That is what happens time and again in many societies today. We know of far too many cases of young women enslaved as unpaid maids, who are sexually and physically abused by their employers.

Accused and criminalised

As a slave, Joseph has no rights and no way to appeal when he is unjustly accused by Potiphar's wife. He is the one who is accused and is jailed. This is similar to the experience of many trafficking victims, particularly sex trafficking survivors who find society blaming them for abuses done to them or in some countries, even criminalising them.

Sustained by God

Three times in Joseph's story the phrase, 'But God was with him' (Genesis 39:2, 21, 23), is repeated, reminding us that no matter how terribly we are treated by others—sold, betrayed, falsely accused, unjustly imprisoned, forgotten—God's presence can carry us through difficult times. The remarkable thing about Joseph is that, as a trafficking survivor, he does not lose his faith, and ultimately speaks forgiveness to his brothers repeatedly (Genesis 45:5–7, 50:19–21).

People trapped in slavery are not nameless statistics; they are loved children of God who need those of us with power and a voice to stand up for them. Let's be those people.

Slavery takes many different forms

Commercial sexual exploitation is a very common form of modern slavery. But there are other forms—forced labour and labour exploitation are also very common.

According to the International Labour Organisation, forced labour is work that is performed involuntarily. Forced labour includes situations where individuals are coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation. It also includes work forced by more subtle methods, including taking passports from a worker or threatening to hand them over to immigration authorities. We get an insight into this type of slavery through Susekula's story below.

Susekula's story

My name is Susekula. I am 26 years old. When I was 14, a man came to my village from a cotton spinning mill two days drive south from here. He came with photos of the cotton mill.

He asked my family and my friend's families if I could go to work in the mill for three years. He showed photos of young women in shiny neat uniforms and the hostel the girls lived in, which had a swimming pool. My parents liked that I would have a stable income and a lump sum bonus of half a year's pay after three years to help with my wedding.

I arrived in the city of Tirupur with 60 other girls from my village, but it was not like he promised. There was no swimming pool and the hostel was dirty. I lived by the factory behind a four-metre fence.

I was rostered on until midnight and was up at 5 a.m., sometimes working 14-hour days. I was often sick, and the cotton fibres irritated my eyes. Lunch was a 30-minute rush and we had to walk 300m to the canteen, jostling with 500 other girls. I got very tired, sometimes fainted and developed back pain.

Often my pay was deducted for minor 'offences', like being one or two minutes late back from lunch. Deductions were also made for 'medical expenses', but we weren't offered medical treatment when

we got sick. We were employed as apprentices for the whole of our contract, even though our training took only two weeks. Then, 30 months into a 36-month contract, things got even more difficult. The company terminated my contract so I wouldn't get my promised lump sum.

When I left the mill, I came across an organisation that works in 30 villages educating girls about the practices of the mill. I learnt about the loopholes the factories exploit to deny us our fundamental workers' rights. I joined 1,000 other girls studying in knowledge centres in those villages, learning life and vocational skills such as servicing mobile phones, tailoring, and beautician work. I trained in repairing mobile phones until I could make a living from that.

Sometimes horrible experiences can be used for good. Two years ago, I returned to this organisation—this time as a staff member! I visit the villages and teach about the tricks used by spinning mill brokers. Because I used to work in a mill, I can relate to those girls. We train them to use their talents and skills in clothes design and sewing for the local market. Some are supported to own a foot-pedal sewing machine. In this way, they can double their income.

Case Study: Cotton Farms

In chapter 1, we discussed slaves in early America working on cotton plantations. Believe it or not, today, the cotton industry continues to be a prolific user of slaves!

Uzbekistan, which is located in Central Asia, is one of the world's largest cotton exporters. Up until the harvest in 2019, the government of Uzbekistan forced over a million children in the growing and harvesting of cotton to keep the industry profitable. Children's schooling was compromised when they were forced to work in cotton fields, and they were also exposed to many chemicals which were harmful to their health and development. Scenarios like this sound very similar to what African Americans faced.

Activists in Uzbekistan who have been fighting against these awful human rights abuses were harassed, detained and exiled. The

good news is that as a result of pressure, the use of child labour has ended in Uzbekistan. The report published in 2020 found that no systematic forced labour occurred during the 2019 cotton harvest. This is a victory for those who have stood against exploitation and shows that people can bring about change by speaking up and taking action on behalf of the exploited.

As many as 100 million households are directly engaged in cotton production globally, and an estimated 300 million people work in the cotton sector as a whole. – Fairtrade Foundation

Discuss:

1. In the stories so far, what do you see as the causes of Joseph and Susekula ending up in slavery?
2. How does Joseph react to his experience of trafficking? How do you react when you are faced with oppression or injustice?
3. Do you see anything redemptive in Joseph and Susekula's stories? Can God use and transform difficult experiences in peoples lives?
4. What do you think living in the situations that they lived in would do to a person and to the choices they make?
5. Do you think Susekula's situation counts as slavery? Why or why not?

Prayer Points

- Pray for the freedom of those who have had their humanity torn from them through the abuse of slavery.
- Pray for the comfort of those who have lost loved ones to this abhorrent trade in humans.
- Ask God to give us inspiration for how we can all be involved in combating this modern evil.



Photo: Baptist World Aid

CHAPTER 3

*But isn't Slavery
in the Bible?*

Photo: Unsplash

Slavery in the Old Testament

Slavery appears in the Bible. Most of us know it, but it's not something we talk about often because it's a murky topic that is hard to understand. This chapter looks at what the Bible says about slavery in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Sadly, while many Christians (as we've found out) were inspired by their Christian faith to combat slavery, others used the slavery in the Bible to justify the legal trade in slaves before it was abolished.

Key verses: Leviticus 25:44-46, Leviticus 25:39-40, Deuteronomy 23:15-16, Deuteronomy 24:7, Philemon 1:1-25

Discuss:

1. What is your understanding of slavery in the Bible? (And, for context, in the ancient world?)
2. How does the presence of slavery in the Bible (Exodus 21:2-4) make you feel?

We need to be honest about that troubled history in order to truly move forward in a way that allows our faith to be a force for freedom. It would be easy to gloss over slavery in the Bible and to say that it's very different from what took place during the transatlantic slave trade and what takes place now.

While there is an element of truth to that, there are also practices in the Bible that would offend our modern moral sensibilities. It's okay for us to recognise that and to be troubled with what appears in scripture and is codified by elements of Old Testament law.

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him.

If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling them as a slave, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you. – Deuteronomy 24:7

Discuss:

1. What is your response to the passages above? In your heart? In your head?
2. Are you aware of any changes across scripture on the issue of slavery? Can you detect a change from the early passages through to the New Testament?

Paul's Challenge to the Culture

With slavery in the Bible, there is a recognisable progression on the issue. This is understandable once we recognise that the Bible is a group of books spanning a period of around 2,000 years. While God is unchanging, we would all recognise that cultures and context change over time.

Because of this, often a practice is seen in a different light in a new era. Slavery is one of the issues that changes in scripture over time and across the span of different cultures within the various writings.

The presence of slavery in scripture has historically been used to justify the trade in human beings. No matter how you understand slavery in the Old Testament and no matter how justified you think it might or might not have been, there is a pivotal moment in the New Testament where the whole thing shifts. Can you pick where it is?

The pivotal moment takes place in the smallest 'book' in the Bible—it's in a letter. It was a letter that Paul, one of the foundational figures of the church, wrote to a man named Philemon. It is believed that Philemon was a wealthy man in the city of Colossae, and it is most probable that his home served as a meeting place for the church.

The short letter addresses Philemon and asks him to take back another man who had somehow left him, Onesimus (that name means 'useful'). Tradition holds, and many scholars agree, that Onesimus was a slave in Philemon's household. While that form of slavery may have looked different from modern slavery, it is still very clear from Paul's letter that, in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus, Onesimus had a lower status than Philemon. In Paul's worldview, that simply should not have been the case.

Paul's view of humanity rested on the fact that all people are created in the image of God and that Christ destroyed the barriers that divide us ...

Paul's view of humanity rested on the fact that all people are created in the image of God and that Christ destroyed the barriers that divide us, so there is no difference between slave and master, or people of different ethnicities, social class and so on. In Paul's time, this was a radical shift, as people were usually valued according to their place on the social ladder, and it was almost impossible to change someone's place in that order. The seismic social shift Paul was pushing towards in his time cannot be understated.

... no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. – Philemon 15-16

So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. – Genesis 1:27

Much of how we understand humanity now is built on what he spoke of, but at the time, it was ground-breaking.

This view becomes explicitly clear in Paul's challenge to Philemon in verses 15 to 17 of the letter. In these verses, Paul urges Philemon to take Onesimus back, 'no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.' He was calling for equal status.

In the arguments around the slave trade at the time of William Wilberforce, both sides of the debate used the letter to Philemon to support their argument. Those in support of slavery argued that Paul's urging of Philemon to take Onesimus back showed that he supported the status quo. It must be admitted that there is an element in Paul's letters where he seems to do exactly that. However, a good reading of Paul will also see a complete undercutting and subversion of the worldviews that drove the status quo of his time. Those who were against slavery interpreted Paul's challenge to how Philemon viewed Onesimus as an argument against slavery.

Either way, what becomes very clear across the arc of scripture is that all people are of equal status in the eyes of God and are worthy of compassion and love, for all are created in the image of God. That view starts in the creation story, is broken by the fall, is redeemed in Christ and is fulfilled in the restored world of Revelation 21-22.

Christ went to the cross for all of us, and we are all called to the hope glimpsed in the resurrection. Seeing that arc enables us to clearly and emphatically argue that modern slavery, with its dehumanisation, abuse, degradation and violence, is an affront to the God we meet, through Christ, in scripture. The movement from ancient times, through Christ and into the New Testament provides a progression that develops a worldview that pushes against modern slavery.

Discuss:

1. What do you think the implications of this pro-equality thinking were in Paul's time?
2. What implications does that thinking have now? Can you see areas where we do not live up to it?

With this in mind, if you are a person who follows in the footsteps of Jesus, you are endowed with a mandate to promote human dignity and to stand against that which seeks to dehumanise.

Human trafficking and slavery are glaring issues that rob people of their humanity. We people of faith have a mandate to stand against it, and we exist within a tradition that has, historically, done exactly that.

The Bible, our story, gives us all we need to construct a worldview that should compel us towards standing for the freedom of those caught in slavery.

Prayer Points

- Pause and reflect on the tragedy of those who have lost their lives and humanity to slavery throughout history, and the sorry state of Christianity and the Bible being used to justify it.
- Pray that Christians around the world will unite around this issue, with a solid view of people's humanity and God's love for all at the heart of that unity.

CHAPTER 4

All Hands on Deck – Responding well

Photo: Unsplash

Engaging with the issue: The injustice of Modern Slavery

At Tearfund, we support expert partners overseas who deal directly with trafficking and slavery.

Key verse: Isaiah 58

Think

1. What do you think needs to be done to combat trafficking and slavery?
 2. What problems might be encountered by those trying to address this?
-

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? – Isaiah 58:6

“If” is very often followed by “then”. Maybe as a child you were told, “If you eat all your vegetables then you can have dessert!” In Isaiah 58, we have the most glorious if and then: If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed...

This passage is a passionate call to act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly before the Lord. God says if we live this way... “Then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Then the Lord will be your delight.”

There is a direct link between how we choose to live and the extent to which we enjoy God’s blessings. Each one of us is accepted by grace alone, but as His children, the more we act in accordance with His ways, the more we experience the abundance of His blessings.

Reflection

The Lord longs to see justice established on the earth. He calls us His people, to act on His behalf so there is freedom, comfort and healing for those who are captive and oppressed. There is nothing that delights Him more than when we act to bring hope to those who need it most.

What is being done?

Tearfund’s work on this issue is concentrated in our Modern Slavery cause. Our projects are in communities that are at high risk from human trafficking and exploitation throughout Thailand, Fiji, Cambodia and Nepal.

These projects each target various aspects of modern slavery and use Tearfund’s five Ps approach. The five Ps are the broad categories we can place the direct actions against trafficking and slavery into: prevention, prosecution, protection, policy and partnership. Tearfund works with partner organisations that are working within all of these major categories.

Prevention

People who are marginalised with limited employment options are highly vulnerable to trafficking and slavery. Addressing the root causes of people’s vulnerability to trafficking through income generation, women’s empowerment, safe migration strategies and the citizenship status of ethnic minorities, are all immediately needed. Cultural perceptions around gender that leave women and girls susceptible to exploitation also need to be changed.

Prosecution

For those trapped in slavery and exploitation, there is little recourse to freedom. Direct intervention is required to secure their freedom. This involves a lot of careful investigation, relationship building with trustworthy authorities in affected areas and the eventual bust of trafficking and slavery rings. Following the investigations used to remove those trapped in slavery from harm, prosecution of the perpetrators is important for deterring other potential offenders. Here, the groundwork of the initial investigations, relationships with trusted local authorities, and the robustness of national legal frameworks are all factors that contribute to successful prosecutions. Work is also being done to hold international financial systems to account to ensure money generated through this criminal industry is not able to flow through legal channels.

Protection

After release from highly abusive situations, survivors freed from exploitation require care and protection. Careful rehabilitation is a key to their on-going recovery, health and welfare. It is essential to support survivors’ legal, physical, education and employment needs for reintegration to be successful. Reintegrating survivors into the communities from where they came, can be a particularly difficult task as they face much stigma and discrimination because of what they have had to endure.

Policy

William Wilberforce recognised early on that government regulations and laws can have a significant and powerful impact on slavery, sending a clear message to society and the world that slavery is not OK. Research and advocacy are key to understanding this impact and to influencing important policy changes. One example is how well the criminal offence of trafficking is defined within national legislation. Strengthening legislative frameworks help to ensure that serious offenders do not find legal loopholes to escape justice.

Partnership

Human trafficking syndicates generate an estimated \$230 billion (NZD) in profits a year, making human trafficking the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. To fight against this horrific trade in human beings, we too must be well coordinated. Combatting trafficking requires a multi-pronged approach involving the coordination of multiple players including the United Nations, governments, non-government organisations, police, lawyers, judges, researchers, social workers, counsellors, donors, supporters and community leaders. Anti-trafficking alliances are being established globally to encourage inter-agency collaboration for a deeper and wider response to trafficking and slavery.

Prayer Points

- Pray for the effectiveness of Tearfund's partners as they work to combat slavery, support the victims, and protect the vulnerable.
- Pray for the holistic recovery of those who have been freed from slavery.
- Pray for the successful prosecution of traffickers and slave owners, that they would see and understand the tragedy of what they have been involved in and become a force for good.



Photo: Nikki Denholm

CHAPTER 5

Your Response

Photo: Nikki Denholm

All Hands on Deck

Although these effects are far away from us in New Zealand, the causes are not. There are many concrete steps you can take to challenge the human trafficking and forced-labour industries. In this chapter, we take a look at the practical ways we can combat slavery, trafficking and exploitation in our everyday lives.

Key verse: Isaiah 58

The estimated number of people currently enslaved in the world is 40.3 million. The global slavery industry generates around \$230 billion (NZD) in profit annually. About \$150 billion of that comes from sexual exploitation.

Those figures are staggering, and it can look like an insurmountable task to combat. However, there is hope.

This problem has grown underground, away from the eyes of a public who would rightly be concerned if they knew about it. Now that the problem is coming to light, people are being compelled to act.

Let's make no mistake; the problem is huge and involves large, coordinated networks generating big profits. Therefore, the response needs to be just as large. Tearfund and its partners are working to fight this problem, but we need your help.

It's extremely easy to think about trafficking and slavery as a distant issue, disconnected from us.

That disconnect makes it easier to ignore and to think that it has nothing to do with us. Then we never bother to act.

Discuss:

- Is this thinking accurate? Why or why not?

That response, while understandable, misses how interconnected the world is. Tearfund's work on the problems of trafficking and slavery focuses on what our partners do overseas, but we recognise that the way we live here in New Zealand impacts these issues.

So there are several things we can do about it.

Learn

You can learn more about these issues here:

- The Tearfund website. Click on "Get involved" and then "Learn".
- Read up on UN coordination work on trafficking through the UN Office of Drugs and Crime at www.unodc.org/unodc/treaties/CTOC/.
- There are legal initiatives to make sure slavery is not in the supply chain of products we consume. Google the UK Modern Slavery Act (2015). Would this help in New Zealand? How can we make this a reality? (See also the Ethical Consumption Toolkit below.)

One of the main reasons trafficking and slavery are growing is profitability. Where there is demand, there is money to be made, and this drives supply. With no demand, there is no profit and, if there is no profit, the industry would diminish exponentially. So then we face a question: are there areas in which we feed the demand and drive the profitability of the exploitation industry? The answer for many of us, as disturbing as it may be, is yes.

Think

1. Supply, vulnerability and demand are three drivers of slavery. What is the role of demand?
2. Tearfund's partners overseas can make a dent on supply and vulnerability. In what ways do you think we in New Zealand might unwittingly feed the demand?

Pray

- Pray for increased awareness about this issue among the general public.
- Pray that we would all be open to the challenge of reflecting on our own lives and adjusting them in the areas where we may be complicit, even unknowingly, in the global slavery industry.
- Pray that we would all have the courage to speak out on this issue.

Act

Combatting human trafficking and slavery takes funding. Creating resources aimed at education and decreasing demand, undercover operations to rescue those who are enslaved, rehabilitation, and prevention—all of it comes at a cost. Therefore, a valuable way of getting involved is to financially support organisations involved in the fight.

- Initiate your own fundraiser
- Ask if you can highlight this issue with your church or small group.
- Join the Tearfund advocate network and keep regularly informed on learning opportunities and campaigns. Check out www.tearfund.org.nz to find out more.
- Use your voice to speak up.

There are two areas where New Zealanders contribute to the issues of the trafficking and slavery that occurs overseas. Both represent an opportunity for us to do something more than just give to the work we discussed in the previous study.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves ... judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. – Proverbs 31:8-9

Pornography

This can be a tricky issue to talk about, but it needs to be noted that sex trafficking and exploitation are closely linked to prostitution and pornography.

These, alongside cultural attitudes around things such as the relationship between men and women, create a climate of acceptance and demand for commercialised sex.

A lot of the pornography produced and made available online now has been created using women and girls who have been trafficked.

Being conscious of our understanding and practice around sexuality, and having respectful, valuing relationships with the opposite sex, can help us combat the demand that drives sex slavery.

We can be a part of curbing demand for this decidedly dehumanising form of slavery by committing to not watching any form of pornography. Statistics tell us that watching internet pornography is widespread. There is no guarantee that if you're watching pornography online, especially the free stuff, you're not viewing material that has been created using people who are caught in slavery and are being abused against their will.

We're not just talking about adults. The average age of the first exposure to online pornography, often accidental, is 11 years old, and it's getting younger. With neurological studies showing that prolonged exposure to pornography chemically alters the brain like a street drug, it is not only damaging children, but it is setting them up to have altered views of sex. This has a long-term impact in contributing to the sexual exploitation industry via the continued use of pornography to achieve the high it gives.

We can also address the problem by supporting equality between men and women, and by confronting behaviours and attitudes that demean either.

Ethical Consumption

Many nations like New Zealand, have become high-consumption nations. We consume at an insatiable rate, and this drives a demand that needs to be met. Couple this demand with a great desire for goods we consume to be obtained cheaply, and the scene is set for trafficking and slavery.

To meet demand, products have to be produced as cheaply as possible, and one place where production costs can be slashed is through reduction of the labour cost. This can be, and is, done by enslaving people. With this in mind, we can respond by becoming more conscientious consumers and can demand that the products we consume be produced more fairly.

It is also important for us to start by taking a close look at our consumption habits.

By buying that \$10 t-shirt, we normalise and create demand for more slave-made goods. By throwing away goods more frequently than we need to, we create enormous waste and fuel industries that deny workers their rights.

One of the things many of us could be challenging is our whole need to consume. One of the reasons we seek out cheap products is because we consume so much. When we consume less, it becomes easier to spend a little more on quality products that have been produced fairly.

Discuss:

1. Which two or three of these responses most appeal to you?
2. Pray as a group that God would stir your hearts to plan some actions against trafficking.

An Ethical Consumption Toolkit:

What you buy:

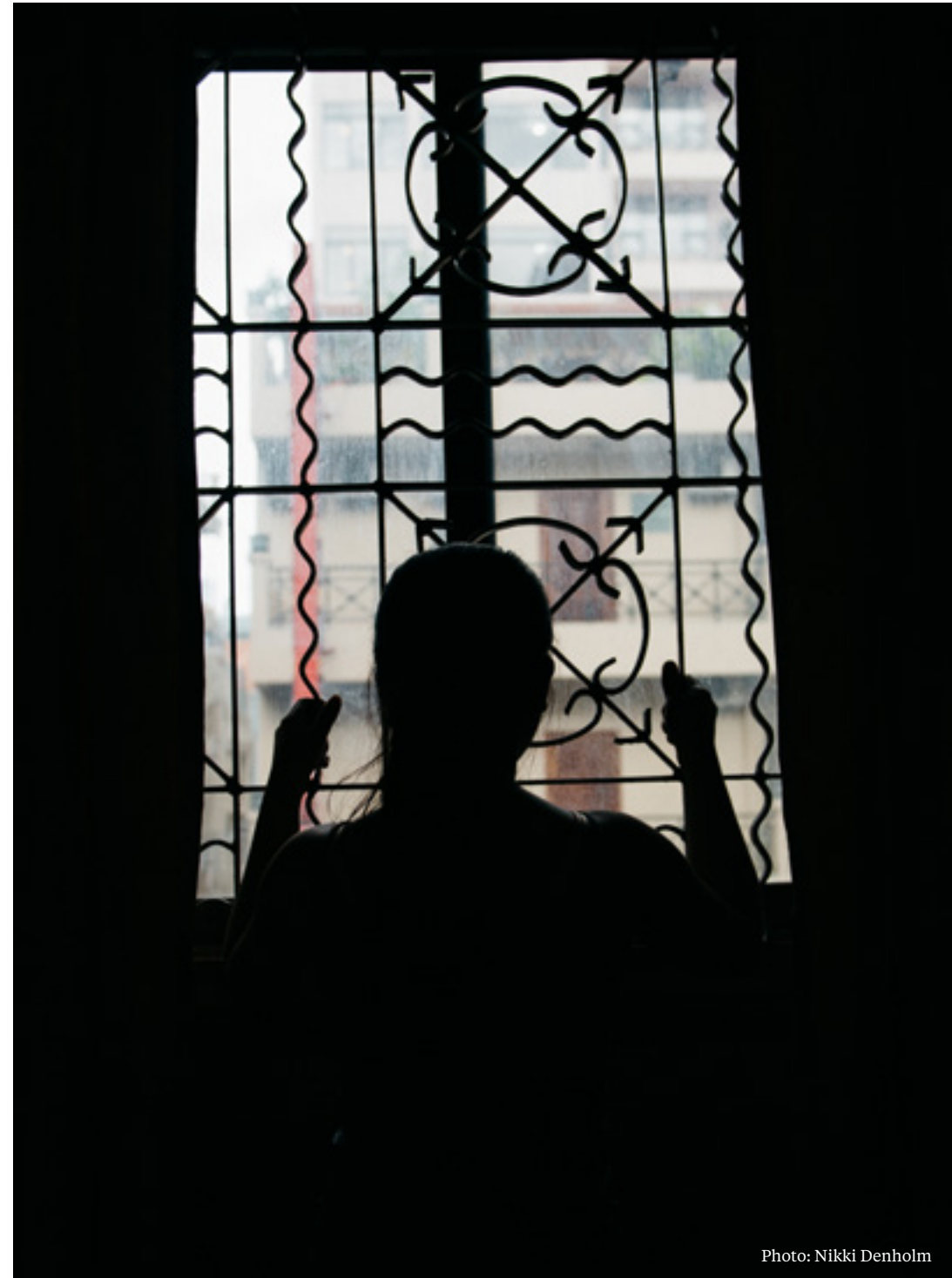
- Follow the general rule: if it seems impossibly cheap, it probably is. Someone's exploited labour has probably paid the true cost.
- Use the Aotearoa New Zealand Ethical Fashion Guide as a point of reference when buying clothes.
- Buy half as many things—but from quality, ethical shops. The quality you're paying for should last twice as long. Avoid impulse purchases.
- Buy second-hand goods, and when you're done with yours, make sure you recycle them.

How you live:

- Take care of your things and the environment! Wash your clothes on low heat, and use a washing line instead of a dryer.
- Always think twice before throwing things away—consider first whether you could repair it, repurpose it, or recycle it.
- You can also make an effort to learn more and raise awareness about this issue—you've made a great start by reading this document! You can find more resources on the Tearfund website.

What you say:

- With the Ethical Fashion Guide, talk to store employees about their supply chain—and write to their bosses.
- Write to your local MP about laws on trafficking. The UK and Australia have established a Modern Slavery Acts. Why not us?



Dig deeper

Check out these places to find out more and get active.

tearfund.org.nz/Church/Advocate-Network.aspx

Link to Tearfund advocates page – become an advocate.

ethicalconsumernz.wordpress.com

Ethical Consumer NZ

fairtrade.org.nz

Buy goods which have been made fairly.

jainternational.org/?page_id=39

Get empowered to combat slavery and exploitation in New Zealand.

unodc.org

United Nations info on human trafficking and slavery.

ilo.org

International Labour Organisation info on trafficking and slavery.

covenanteyes.com

Keep yourself and your home pornography free.

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