



- b. Educate your community about the exploitation inherent in adult book stores/entertainment centers and pornography.
 - c. Ask travel agencies, hotels and tour operators to sign the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism (www.thecode.org).
- 3. Advocate for change.**
- a. Call or write your elected officials and tell them that you care about human trafficking and want stronger laws to protect victims. Get news from www.polarisproject.org on how to engage in political action and advocacy.
 - b. Encourage lawmakers to stop punishing prostitutes and undocumented immigrants. Most trafficked people in the U.S. are afraid to speak up or escape because they fear the government — with good cause. They need to have the freedom to escape from bondage, and we need to be there to help restore them — not punish them.
- 4. Examine your community.**
- a. If you suspect slavery or exploitation, call the national trafficking hotline: 888-3737-888. Find out what to look for at: www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking
 - b. Document slavery in your area with slaverymap.org.
 - c. Pressure law enforcement agencies to make investigations.
 - d. Place coasters at bars and sleeve
- for coffee cups to promote the hotline (888-3737-888). In public places, disseminate posters, brochures and other materials about trafficking.
- 5. Teach caregivers.** Encourage health care providers and law enforcement officials to be aware of the signs of human trafficking. Download resource guides from www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking
- 6. Encourage equal rights for females.** Many of the girls sold into sex slavery are the unwanted girls of families in cultures that value males. Selling them is easier on the family than feeding an unwanted mouth. If women were seen as equals everywhere, fewer men would use them as mere objects. Encourage your church to regularly speak the words that girls and boys and men and women are created equal in the image of God. (Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective: <http://www.mcusa-archives.org/library/resolutions/1995/1995-6.html>)
- 7. Support micro-loans and education.** Desperation and lack of education create the conditions for slavery to thrive. Those conditions must change if slavery is to end. See Mennonite Economic Development Associates, www.meda.org
- 8. Address the addiction of pornography in your congregation.** Statistics show that Christians use pornography at the same rate as non-Christians.

Let my people go!

Modern Slavery Bible study and resources

This is our hope: God is actively creating a world in which all can thrive. All will be able to "...sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid." No one will labor in vain, or bear children for calamity. All will receive God's blessing. (Micah 4:4, Is. 65:23)

Intro

Currently there are more slaves in the world than during the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade days before the Emancipation Proclamation. You and I benefit from forced and child labor of these slaves when we buy produce, coffee, tea, seafood, rubber, poultry, sugar, chocolate, electronics and clothes or eat in restaurants and profit from cheap construction costs. Slaves are also involved in pornography and the sex-trade.

Because modern slavery is underground and hard to track, we can only estimate the number of children, women and men involved. Worldwide, the estimate is 12-30 million and in the United States, between 45,000 and 50,000, with hundreds of thousands more at risk. Likely you've eaten chocolate from Cote D'Ivoire where thousands of young children harvest our sweets without pay. Coffee has perhaps the highest rate of slave production. In Central America, Africa and the Caribbean, slaves still cultivate and harvest sugar. The back-breaking labor-intensive harvesting of strawberries in Germany, Japan, Mexico and Louisiana is sometimes done by undocumented workers in horrendous conditions. Miami, Portland, Ore., Las Vegas and Toledo are the four U.S. cities with the highest number of arrests, investigations and rescue of domestic child-sex victims. Mennonite Church USA has congregations in each of these cities. Now is the time for Christians to unite in a modern abolitionist movement.

When delegates at Convention 2009 unanimously passed the Statement against Human Trafficking (see below), likely they thought they were not participants in this sin. But given the prevalence of slaves in the United States and around the world, we all have a responsibility to consider it, take counsel and speak out. (Judges 19)

¹2001 report by the U.S. State Department

²Human trafficking is not 'caused' by poverty, lack of education, lack of legal status, or any other vulnerability factor: human trafficking is caused by human traffickers – criminals who commit criminal acts against victims and vulnerable people. For more information visit the UN website at http://www.no-trafficking.org/resources_background_risks.html



Bible Study

God hears the groans of slaves.

Exodus 1:8-14, 2:23-26, 3:7-10

Psalms 82

Luke 4:18-19

1. Along with the command to Moses to free the slaves, God promises to be with Moses and for the first time, provides a name, I am who I am, to Moses, thus highlighting the importance of freeing slaves. How might God call someone to deliver slaves today? What tools does God give to abolitionists today?
2. God hears the groans of slaves and is concerned. Why does God care? How do we hear the groans of those who are enslaved? How do we pay attention to them? How do we hear what God hears and hear God's call?
3. What is the relationship between our wealth and the oppression of others?
4. How does God call us to "rescue the weak and needy"?
5. Jesus proclaims that the anointing of the Spirit is evident when we release the captive. What does that mean today? What is "good news to the poor"?

God sets people free.

Exodus 21:20, 23:12

Leviticus 22:11; 25:39-41

Deuteronomy 23:15-16

Matthew 7:12

Acts 16:16-22

6. Compare slavery in the Bible, in the early United States and today. What are the similarities? The differences?
7. How do we act on the biblical call for justice in a global community?
8. How do we work with the clash between being good stewards by getting the most for our money and

the expense of fair wages for the people who make our goods and provide our services?

9. Because Paul and Silas healed the slave girl in Acts 16, they were imprisoned. How might abolitionist actions today place us in personal danger and inconvenience?

God demands justice.

Amos 4:1-3

Isaiah 1:10-20; 58

Jeremiah 22:13

Ezekiel 16:48-50

Matthew 23:23-24

Luke 6:31

1 Tim 6:17-19

10. Amos and Ezekiel paint an unflattering view of wealthy people who are pampered and oppress the poor. Would the people he is addressing have physically encountered the needy people they were oppressing, or might those people have been hidden from their sight by high walls? What "walls" now hide the unsightly poor from our consciousness?
11. Isaiah dramatically quotes God as weary of worship services and prayer from people who oppress the poor. Yet God points out that if the people stop doing wrong, seek justice and encourage the oppressed, God will be quick to forgive. How might our worship services today better please God and draw us toward seeking justice and caring for the poor?
12. In Isaiah 58, God declares that sharing food with hungry people, rather than individual fasting, pleases God and is a banquet of justice. How can our acts of setting the oppressed free feel more like worship?
13. Jesus also calls us to worship in ways

that bring justice to the oppressed. What actions might your congregation take to make more visible its commitment to justice? What might it mean to become a slave-free congregation?

"But evil and injustice continue to exist because we demand it. From cheap sex to cheap clothes or candy, we demand that others be oppressed for our benefit."

"We are not going to be punished for benefiting from crimes like human trafficking and slave labor. And we won't be rewarded either for choosing to step outside of systems of oppression. There is no carrot or stick when it comes to making a deliberate choice to love others. We just have to decide that we care enough for someone else's daughter or son to stop demanding that they be oppressed so that we can have everything we desire."

Julie Clawson

<http://blog.sojo.net/2009/11/23/human-trafficking-justice-and-csi/>

Responses

Consider it: Become educated by checking out these websites:

- a. www.freetheslaves.net
- b. <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/index.htm> U.S. Department of State Trafficking Report, 2009
- c. <http://www.ijm.org/> International Justice System
- d. <http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/>
- e. <http://www.stophetraffik.org/default.aspx>
- f. <http://whatsyourresponse.com>
- g. "Look Beneath the Surface" materials on Human Trafficking are available free from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Rescue and Restore. To order brochures, posters, 10-minute

DVD, folders, pocket cards with "how to identify victims of trafficking," go to: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/form.htm>

For additional resources, visit <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/trafficking>

Take counsel: Consult with others.

1. **Slave-Free Campuses.** Start a group at your school or university, and make sure your campus is free of products made with slave labor.
2. **Faith, Schools and Freedom.** Help your faith community or school become an Abolitionist Organization. See the resources section: www.notforsalecampaign.org.
3. **Organize your community** to address the issue in your area. For tips, see www.stopmodernslavery.org/docs/toolkit.pdf

Speak out:

1. **Become an informed consumer.** Tell companies with your dollars that you want employees to be treated and paid fairly — and allowed to be free human beings.
 - a. At chainstorereaction.com, you may email companies to ask that their products be slave-free.
 - b. Buy Fair Trade, slave-free or products made by survivors.
 - c. Be an active shareholder—research the labor and investment policies of your company. Encourage companies you invest in to be slave-free. Visit www.mma-online.org
2. **Tourism matters.**
 - a. Visit the Trafficking In Persons Report from the State Department. Find out which countries are the worst trafficking offenders. Write a letter to their travel bureau and tell them you won't visit the country until they address the issue.