

## WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS CARE ABOUT FAIR TRADE?

*A note about this study: This Bible Study has been designed for youth groups. It is anticipated that young people, highly exposed by the media, might already have some awareness of social justice issues like Fair Trade. The study then, aims to leave room for young people to talk about what they already know, and share their knowledge with others who may not have heard about Fair Trade. We hope that young people will seek out some answers on their own, instead of being instructed by a leader. This study also assumes that many of the young people in your group will be familiar with matters of Christian faith and discipleship. Many of them won't need a Sunday-school-type lesson, but instead an opportunity to connect and apply what they already know about Christianity to the issue of Fair Trade.*

*The questions attempt to generate discussion by being conceptual – rather than direct questions that require simple, confined answers. You can help generate discussion by leaving room for varied answers and perspectives on this issue that the young people will come with or develop as they do research on the spot.*

### GATHERING:

Look up Oxfam Fair Trade Clips on YouTube  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mgPEP8HAss> and play.

#### Questions:

- **What are these clips/commercials talking about? What is Fair Trade? Have you heard about it?**
- **Why are they making commercials about Fair Trade?**
- **What is going on in the world that there is this movement called Fair Trade?**

For help, have one or two people do a web search and find out more. Or have them look up some of these websites.

<http://www.transfair.ca>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/fair-trade>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair\\_trade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_trade)

<http://www.tenthousandvillages.ca>

<http://www.salvationarmy.ca/2006/03/22/fair-trade>

#### Question:

- **Why should Christians care about Fair Trade?**

*Have the participants think about what they know of Jesus and the Bible to answer this question. Give them some time to think about and share their own answers before continuing with the study – there are lots of reasons that Christians should care about*

*Fair Trade and numerous Bible verses to support justice, compassion, help for the poor, humility etc.*

## EXPLORE THE WORD – OLD TESTAMENT

### AMOS

*As you read this version of Amos that compares historical information about Israel to a corporation, have participants leave their Bibles open to the book of Amos, ready to read verses aloud when the story calls for them.*

So there once was a guy named Amos, and he was a shepherd... well, maybe he was more than that. The Bible suggests that he owned the sheep himself and maybe even had other shepherds working under him. And these guys weren't just caring for any old sheep. Amos and his men kept a very particular kind of desert sheep that had excellent wool. Amos had an orchard too, an orchard of sycamore trees. And so if ancient Israel had been a corporation, Amos would be an executive — knowledgeable about the market, respected by his peers and his employees — but then sort of an executive turned whistle-blower. Or maybe we should call him a 'consultant'. This book he writes is some kind of commentary on the company, maybe more like a *manifesto against the company* – telling them everything that's wrong with the way they do business. And it doesn't look good for them.

You see, Israel Inc. was headed up by a guy name Jeroboam who was ruthless in business. Since he took over the company, he had been buying up other organizations in hostile takeovers wherever he could find an internal weakness. Expanding in every direction, Jeroboam wasn't shy about stepping on the little guy to grow his empire. He set up the head office in Samaria and made sure that every transaction went through them. As the sheer size of the company expanded, so did its bank accounts. Business boomed because Israel didn't just distribute the product, but owned all distribution companies too – no one could go anywhere and send anything without paying Israel somewhere along the way. Thanks to Jeroboam, Israel was climbing the Fortune 500 list.

But along with prosperity came social turmoil – a mess of greed and oppression. Finally God had had enough and sent Amos to say so.

Mostly, God was mad at the executives, the rich ones

**Amos 3:10**

Mad at them for their summer houses and winter houses

**Amos 3:15**

... houses full of everything opulent and luxurious

**Amos 6:4**

Mad at them for drinking too much wine

**Amos 6:6-7**

Mad at them for the way they would stop at nothing to get richer

**Amos 8:4-6**

... and for the way they exploited the poor, making them do the hard work and keep them comfortable

**Amos 2:7**

**Amos 5:11-12**

... for the way they used their money to pervert justice in the courthouses

**Amos 5: 7 & 10**

And especially for lives devoid of true spiritual value

**Amos 5:21-23**

It didn't look for the company

**Amos 2:13-16**

God expected more from them

**Amos 5:14-15**

**Amos 5:24**

Amos told Israel that God wanted righteousness, which didn't mean showy piety or personal perfection. Instead, Amos was talking about justice for the weak, for the poor, those afflicted with disease or disability, for anyone who was suffering, for the innocent, for the dispossessed, for those sold into slavery, for the exploited and displaced. The Law of God demanded compassion and mercy to accomplish justice.

**Questions:**

- **Amos repeats the line: "you sell the needy for a pair of sandals". What does he mean by this? How does it apply to the question of Fair Trade?**
- **In terms of international commercial trade in the 21st century, what would justice look like?**

## **EXPLORE THE WORD – NEW TESTAMENT**

### **THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

*Ask the group to recall from memory the story of the Good Samaritan. Let them help each other to fill in as many details as they can remember from the story they've probably heard many times.*

**Question:**

- **What do you remember learning about the Samaritan? Why is it important that Jesus said he was a 'Samaritan'?**

***Note to leader:** Much has been made of the helper's status as a Samaritan because of a somewhat turbulent relationship between Jews and Samaritans. It is often suggested that the Jews were to take special notice of the Samaritan's otherness – someone they despised was the hero of the story.*

Have someone read **Luke 10:34**

**Question:**

- **What is the significance of the line "he put the man on his own donkey?"**

*Hint: remember Samaria in the story of Amos*

Commentary: The Samaritan owns a donkey! He has resources. He's not poor. Remember in the story of Amos how Samaria was the economic mecca of world! All kinds of rich people lived there. This guy comes from Samaria and he has his own donkey – he's most likely quite wealthy. Moved by compassion he gets down off his donkey to help the man, and pretty much writes a blank cheque for his care.

## ACTIVITY – OCCUPATIONS

This is a great youth group game that teenagers have a lot of fun with. When played normally, each person writes a job on a slip of paper and places it in the hat without letting anyone know what he/she has written. This can be something ordinary or something ridiculous, depending on one's style or strategy! The leader reads aloud each job placed in the hat. The leader will read them a second time and then put away the hat. From here the group must proceed from memory. The task is to find out which person placed which job in the hat. The person to the left of the leader goes first and asks someone: "Are you the \_\_\_\_\_?" If they are correct, that person must come to sit with the person who guessed. They may now work as a team and get to guess again. When the guess is incorrect, the play proceeds to the next player. The game continues until one person has gotten everyone on their team without being guessed (if a person has guessed someone, they come to sit next to the person who guessed them and form a team. Other players will try to guess the occupation of the team leader who guessed correctly. If they find out the team leader, the whole team must move to join the person who guessed the leader's occupation correctly).

Feel free to play a round of this game the normal way if you have extra time before or after the study, but for the purposes of this Bible Study on Fair Trade, have the participants pick out their job from a hat (you should reproduce the jobs and descriptions on individual cards and place them in a hat or bowl). From what's left in the hat after everyone has taken one, you will be able to determine the list of occupations that should be read aloud two times for everyone to remember and guess from. When a person is guessed, they should read the paragraph on their job card in order to tell the other players more about what they do... this will hopefully be a good learning opportunity (even if not as fun as to the original version of Occupations!)

## Corporate CEO

I'm the president of a multi-national corporation. We make something that you use every day. Each time you use it, we make money. I'm not sure how it gets made. And mostly, I don't care, as long as the shareholders are making enough money to keep them from whining that we're not selling enough stuff! The cheaper we can make something, the happier they are!

## Seamstress

I can make 4 shirts in an hour. By the end of the day my eyes are tired from squinting and my hands are stiff from holding the needle for the fine sewing. But if I don't make 50 shirts in a day, I won't get paid and won't have any rice for my daughter's supper. I saw the tag that they put on the shirt after I've sewn it. The woman on the label was smiling and beautiful. She doesn't look like anyone I've ever seen before.

## Child Soldier

It's my job to make sure that the slaves don't find a diamond and keep it for themselves. I watch them working in the river as long as there is daylight. I could have been one of them, but after my father was killed, the captain took me to the camp with other orphaned children and taught me how to use this gun. Now grown-ups are afraid of me. They give me the diamonds when they find them and I take them to the captain. I've seen him trade diamonds for weapons.

## Apple Picker

I'm a migrant worker in North America. I have come from Jamaica with my brother and cousin to have a better life. In autumn we pick apples in Canada. In the winter we head south to find work on other farms. Things are much better here than they were at home. Our boss is nice, and says that we can be assured of work here next year. We made enough money last season to buy a new trailer to sleep in and take with us when we move around.

## Play It Fair Worker

I used to play soccer when I was in highschool. I loved playing more than anything. At university, I took a class on International Development and learned that not all kids had the same kind of chances I've had to learn or play. Most of the time, kids in developing countries weren't even safe in their homes. Instead of taking a job at my dad's printing company, I decided to sign up with Play It Fair. I live in Zimbabwe now and organize soccer games for the kids here. We have a lot of fun together. It's amazing how many of them have never played with a soccer ball, only sewn one together at a factory.

## Planter

I work in a greenhouse in Honduras. To make more flowers grow, and faster than

normal, they make us spray the flowers with special chemicals. I don't know what's in the spray, but it makes me cough and burns my eyes. I try to cover my mouth and nose with my collar, but it doesn't always help. The woman who used to work next to me had a baby last month. Her child was born without legs. There has been talk that it was because of the spray.

### Seed Activist

I fight against industry giants who are distributing biologically engineered seeds. In order to make more profits for their companies, some corporations are using technology to boost their crop and establish monopolies on produce. It's my job to raise awareness about the evils of a corporate-controlled global food industry and the long-term health effects associated with biologically altered crops.

### Sally-Ann Hand-Crafter

I used to make baskets in a factory on the edge of town. I had so many baskets to make in a day that I didn't have time to eat lunch and was often there until well after dark. One day I was late getting to work and I was fired. So I walked around all day trying to figure out what to do. I saw a sign that said 'The Salvation Army'. I had heard about these people and how they help others. They helped me a lot. They gave me a job making baskets in their own factory. We only have to work 7 hours a day, get paid a decent wage and even get a lunch break! I've never enjoyed going to work until now.

### Ten Thousand Villages Volunteer

Some people at my church started talking about Fair Trade a few years ago before it was such a hot topic. They thought that Christians shouldn't be buying things that had been made by their fellow human beings in unsafe or unfair working conditions. They decided to do something about it. The next year they opened a store that sold only products that had been purchased from the people who made them at a fair price. I volunteer at the store so that the money that would have been paid to me goes instead to the people who make the gifts we sell.

### Discount Store Sales Associate

I sell cheap stuff. The cheaper the better! Lots of people shop in our store. I make minimum wage in Canada and work 35 hours a week. I belong to a union that makes sure I'm paid fairly, have sick days and don't have to work in unsafe conditions. I've heard talk on the news about the store I work for. It seems that some of the people who make the things we sell aren't as lucky as I am. They're not allowed to organize unions to protect themselves. I wish there was something I could do to help them, but they're so far away.

### Advertiser

It's my job to sell the product. Where did it come from? I don't know. How did it get

here? I don't care. And it's my job to make sure that you don't stop to wonder about those things either! All I know is that you NEED this thing. It will make you hip. It will make you happy. It will change your life. Don't you want to have the thing all your friends are talking about?

### Bee Keeper

I own bees. I collect their honey. And I sell it at craft sales and farmer's markets. I enjoy owning my own business and being involved in every part of production. I set my own work hours and prices and get a lot of satisfaction from selling good quality honey.

### Cocoa Farmer

My family and I used to own the cocoa plantation we work on. That was until we couldn't afford to buy the seed anymore. A big cocoa company offered to buy our farm and let us keep working it. Each day we spend all the daylight hours trimming, weeding and handpicking the coffee beans. The boss comes to collect our crop at dusk and drops a few coins on the ground for our trouble. Last year, my son lost his arm when the machete he was using to hack back the weeds slipped from his grasp. He can't work as fast now.

### Slave Trader

When I see a girl who looks strong enough to work, I go after her. Sometimes it's as easy as offering to pay her mother to have her. Other times, I can convince her to come with me by promising a better life. When I have help from a friend, sometimes all I have to do is grab her. Once I fill the van I drive it out to meet my contact who pays 10,000 rupees a head.

## **PRAYER**

Spend some time meditating while listening to the song *Yahweh* by U2 (*How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb*)

Or:

Pray for people like those you have learned about in the Occupations game

Or:

Spend time with your eyes closed and thinking about where your clothes might have come from. Imagine what it would be like to work in a sweatshop, long hard days in warm climates, very few breaks or privileges, low wages and difficulty meeting the needs of your family.

Or:

Have one person say: "Let justice roll like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" and someone answer: "On Earth as it is in Heaven". Have participants repeat this pattern over and over.

## **MISSION**

Ideas for putting this into action:

Change your habits! Where do you spend your money? Could you spend it to promote Fair Trade? What would Jesus buy?

Get your church to buy only Fair Trade coffee for meetings and meals. Then write to us at the World Missions Department and tell how you did it!

## Some places to find Fair Trade products in Canada:

Review the 'Where to Buy' and 'Licensees' lists at: <http://www.transfair.ca>

*Gifts etc:*

**Ten Thousand Villages** (cities across Canada and online):

<http://www.tenthousandvillages.ca>

**Peri Dar** (Quebec) online catalogue: <http://www.peridar.com>

*Flowers:*

**Sierra Flower Trader** (Montreal) – website contains list of retailers carrying their flowers in Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick: <http://www.sierraeco.com>

*Sports Balls:*

**Y Focus** (affiliated with Ottawa YMCA): <http://yfocus.ncf.ca/fairtrade>

*Coffee:*

**Starbucks** – although you still can't buy Fair Trade coffee by the cup, Starbucks is the largest distributor of Fair Trade coffee that you can brew at home.

<http://www.starbucks.ca>

**The Freeway Coffee House** (Hamilton): <http://www.frwy.ca>

*Clothing:*

**New K. Industry** (Quebec): <http://www.newkindustry.com>

**Fair Trade Clothing Co-Op** (Toronto): <http://www.fairtradeclothing.ca>

Fair Trade products are popping up all over the place. Look for the certified Fair Trade logo.

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