

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING 2023

INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL JUSTICE
COMMISSION



I HAVE HEARD THEIR CRIES

YOUTH RESOURCE

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'The Israelites groaned under the slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Exodus 2:23-25 NRSV).



WHAT IS SLAVERY?

Slavery is not a new idea. It is something that has been around for thousands of years and has been part of many different societies like Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome and Egypt. Slavery is when one person controls another person as if that person is a thing or a possession. That control is based upon the threat of and/or actual use of violence whether physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual or financial. When people are experiencing slavery, they are being exploited. This means that they are being treated unfairly for another person's selfish advantage and gain.

People who are enslaved are dehumanised and treated as if they are an object. Their identity and ability to make choices are stripped away

from them. Restrictions are placed on every area of their lives. They are forced to sacrifice their hopes, dreams, loved ones, their past and their future. If they are paid for their work, it is barely enough to survive. It takes away their freedom and is a violation of their human rights.

It is hard to imagine living under the bondage of slavery. The Bible says that we are all created in the image of God. People who are keeping slaves are not treating people with the respect and dignity that God gave all of us. Slavery takes away people's freedom, joy, opportunity, hope and so much more. It takes away the light in which all people were created to live in and share with others. It surrounds them in darkness instead.

The 2022 Global Estimates indicate that the number of people experiencing modern slavery and human trafficking globally has increased to an estimated 49.6 million people on any given day. This means worldwide approximately:

- 27.6 million people are experiencing forced labour and sexual exploitation
- 22 million individuals are experiencing forced marriages



WHAT DOES SLAVERY LOOK LIKE AROUND THE WORLD?

Slavery can look many different ways around the world. Here are some examples:

Angela* is an orphan living with her uncle and aunt. Upon arriving to live with them, she was told that every day, she would have to clean the house, make all the meals, wash all the clothes and complete any other task that was given to her. This meant that she had to miss school most days to get everything done.

Klenam's* father lost his job in their village. Their family was large with too many children to feed. When a neighbour introduced Klenam to a man promising him a high-paying job and a chance to finish his school, he thought this opportunity would help his family. Only once he got there, he never went to school. Instead, he worked 12-14 hours every day on the shrimp boats diving deep underneath the water to untangle the nets while receiving no pay and little food for this dangerous work.

Fatemeh's* family fled their city when the militia invaded and began to attack those living there. Displaced and living in a refugee camp, Fatemeh's father married her off despite being very young and telling her family that she did not want to do this. Now, her much older husband

and her mother-in-law control every area of her life and profit off the work she provides in the home.

Sally's* new boyfriend is handsome and charming. He gives her gifts all the time - new clothes, pedicures, jewellery and gift cards. He makes her feel so loved and accepted. She has always been looking for a place to belong. After weeks of this, her boyfriend then tells her that she needs to repay him and help him out by providing sex to his friends. When she tries to resist and leave, he becomes violent with her and threatens to hurt her family.

Ravi* was 12 years old when his parents gave him permission to go with a recruiter who promised him he will earn a good salary by making carpets. Once there, the recruiter forces Ravi to work long hours. What he didn't finish during the day, he would have to finish under candlelight. He was not paid as promised, food was not given often and his living conditions were horrible.

**Names changed to protect their identity*



BIBLE TEACHING

The book of Exodus is a story about the slavery the people of Israel experienced. At this part of the story, the Israelites were living in a foreign land - Egypt. There was a new Pharaoh who did not know anything about Joseph and how the Israelites came to live there. This Pharaoh didn't know how Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, brought to Egypt, falsely accused and imprisoned. He knew nothing of how God had a purpose for Joseph's life and freed him from prison and then made him the second in command for Egypt. In this role, Joseph was able to help his brothers during the time of famine and resettle them in Egypt.

As the Israelites multiplied in numbers and strength, Pharaoh became afraid of them. He said to his people: 'Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country' (Exodus 1:10). So Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites. He set taskmasters over them and exploited them for their labour. They were oppressed and the Egyptians were ruthless in imposing tasks on them. Their lives were made bitter and unbearable with the building of the cities of Pithom and Rameses (Exodus 1:11-14). So much so that 'the Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out' (Exodus 2:23).

Thankfully, we know that God cared about the Israelites and that they matter to him. He loved them deeply and heard their cries of sadness. We read in Exodus 2:23-25 (MSG) that, 'Their cries for relief from their hard labour ascended to God: God listened to their groanings. God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw what was going on with Israel. God understood.'



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**What do these verses say about God?
What do they say he does?**

All those thousands of years ago when the Israelites were being treated badly as slaves, God cared deeply about their situation. He not only heard their cries and groanings, but he listened. He saw what was going on. He remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and with Jacob. God was moved into action as we see the rest of the Exodus story unfold. As God began to move his people physically out of slavery and its darkness and into his light.

In our world today, God cares just as much about the millions of people who are slaves - both adults and children. He hears and listens to the Angelas, Klenams, Fatemehs, Sallys and Ravis of this world, who are being mistreated and who wonder if anyone cares about them. These verses from the book of Exodus let us know that they are not alone, and that God hears, God sees and he understands.

God also wants us to care about those who are slaves and are trapped in slavery. He wants us to know there are ways we can help people who are experiencing slavery.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

Do you have any ideas of how you can end modern slavery and human trafficking where you are?

Some things you can do are:

1. Know the signs - learn what indicators to look for that might show someone is being exploited. There are many things to look out for, including people's living conditions, work conditions and noticing how other adults around them treat them.
2. Learn how to be safe on the Internet - how can you and your friends keep each other safe?
3. Tell others (advocate) - once you know the signs, share them with others so they know too. Share what you learned today and the signs of slavery with your family and friends. This helps create safer communities. Find out if where you live has support for survivors. In some places, if you suspect someone might

be experiencing slavery, you can report it. Work with a small group in your community to raise awareness of this issue. Maybe you could present something in your school, workplace or church?

4. Learn more about slavery, human trafficking and exploitation. Share with your family, friends and church family. Do a presentation at your school, work or church.
5. Pray! Pray for people who are experiencing slavery and for God to protect them and hear their prayers. Pray for our leaders and for organisations that support survivors.

6. Treat people with kindness, respect and love.
7. Encourage your friends and family members to treat people with respect, kindness and love.
8. Ask the leaders at your school and church and even in the government to better protect and help people who are unsafe.

Let's pray together for all those in the world who are being enslaved and treated as slaves.



Dear Jesus

Please help all the slaves and those in slavery all around the world. Protect their hearts and their minds. Let them find freedom and help them to find safety. Protect their families and help families that have been separated to come together again. Help them to know that you love them and care for them and that you are with them even when life is hard and sad. Let them know that they are important and loved.

Amen.

Prayer from Alina, age 9 - provided with permission within the framework of ethical storytelling.

ACTIVITY

PRAYER STATIONS