

Let my people GO



YOUTH RESOURCE

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FOCUS: God has created all people to be free - moving from darkness to light.

'Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 5:1 NIV)

INTRODUCTION

49.6 million. That's how many people are currently estimated to be living in modern slavery today.

49.6 million people who have been robbed of their freedom and are being treated as possessions.

49.6 million people who are harmed, hurt and exploited for profit.

49.6 million people, some of whom are the same age as you or younger.

49.6 million people who are loved by the Creator of the universe.

49.6 million people who have the right to be free.

When we think of the estimated number of people who are enslaved today, it can be overwhelming. It can feel too big for us to do anything significant. But the good news today is that Jesus came to set the oppressed free, and as his followers we can partner with him in the fight for freedom. We can join him in combating the injustice that is modern slavery.



WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?

Modern slavery is a term that describes the exploitation of people for financial gain. People who experience modern slavery are often tricked, trapped or traded into their situation. They are not free to refuse or leave because of threats, abuse, coercion and deception. Modern slavery is an umbrella term that includes forced labour, forced marriage, human trafficking, the sale of children, sexual exploitation, debt bondage and organ trafficking. Essentially, people in modern slavery are robbed of their freedom.

Phil was 12 years old when police entered the place that he had been living with a group of other people. He had travelled to New Zealand from his home country, an island in the Pacific. His family had been told that in New Zealand he would receive an excellent education and go to a wonderful school. When Phil arrived in New Zealand, he was forced to pick fruit in the orchards and work for the man he was living with: he wasn't allowed to contact his family back home and he wasn't allowed to go to school. If he refused to work, he would be beaten by the man who had brought him over to New Zealand. Phil and his family were tricked, and then Phil was trapped in a situation from which there was no way out. After the police had discovered what was going on and intervened, Phil was able to return home to his family.

Esther was born in Haiti. When she was born, her family were very poor and didn't feel they had the money to look after her. In the hope that Esther would receive a better life, they gave her to friends. The arrangement was that she would work as a domestic servant for free and be fed and cared for. Esther joined approximately 300,000 other Haitian children as a 'restavec'.

While Esther was staying with and working for the family, she was not paid and she was not able to attend school. Sometimes, she missed out on meals, and on other occasions family members were abusive towards her. When Esther turned 15, the family were supposed to start paying Esther, but instead they dismissed her from her work. Esther had nowhere to go and ended up living on the streets.

'LET MY PEOPLE GO!'

'Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness'"' (Exodus 5:1 *NIV*).

Can you think of a time when you spoke up because someone wasn't being treated right or fairly? Can you think of a time you stood up for someone else? Share it with the group.

It was a brave and courageous thing for Moses to speak truth to the person who held an important position. Here Moses was, stepping into the palace, standing before one of the most powerful men in the world and about to seek freedom for the oppressed. 'Let my people go,' he said.

Together, take some time to read the following verses of Scripture. You might like to take turns at reading them:

- Exodus 2:23-25
- Exodus 3:1-12 (if time allows, read the rest of chapter 3 and chapter 4)
- Exodus 5:1



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you think God feels about slavery?
- Why do you think God chose a person (Moses) to lead the Israelites out of slavery?
- How do you think Moses felt about going to Pharaoh?
- What was Pharaoh's response to Moses?
- Can you think of any situations, locally or nationally, where God might be asking you to speak up or stand up for others?

People living in and experiencing freedom is really important to God. It's why he chose Moses to lead the Israelites to freedom. Even if Moses was afraid, he still had the courage to go to Pharaoh and say, 'Let my people go.' Pharaoh had more power than Moses, but Moses went and spoke to Pharaoh anyway because it was the right thing to do. This story is important to remember because it shows us that God hears the cries of people who are hurting, and he will choose people to help those who are stuck in slavery and lead them to freedom.

One of the reasons that Jesus came into the world was so that people living in oppression and slavery could find freedom. He wants all people to be free. As lifelong followers of Jesus, we get to join Jesus in his mission to see people live freely. One of the ways that we do this is by fighting against slavery and helping people to find freedom.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

One of the things we can do is speak truth to power like Moses did. We can speak up for others when we know they are not being treated properly.

Advocating for policies and legislation that protect people from modern slavery and human trafficking is one of the areas in which we can engage in the fight for freedom. We can advocate for policies within our organisation that ensures our purchasing practices are ethical (for example, ensuring that we choose suppliers who are transparent about their supply chains). We can advocate externally to government for legislation that protects workers in the country we live in. This could look like creating petitions or writing to leaders in government to ask for modern slavery legislation. The Global Slavery Index and annual Trafficking in Persons Report give information about what each country is doing to combat modern slavery. This can be a great place to start when we want to know about where we can advocate for change.

Educating ourselves and creating awareness is another way we can engage in the fight for freedom. Share with your family, friends and church family. Do a presentation at your school, work or church. Also, learn about the indicators, risk factors and methods of recruitment 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 people treat others.



ACTIVATE DISCUSSION

Does your country feature in the Global Slavery Index or annual Trafficking in Persons Report? If so, look it up and see how your country is doing. What surprises you?

Who is your territory's MSHT contact?

What is your territory doing to respond to modern slavery and human trafficking? Getting in touch with your MSHT contact is the best way to find this out.

Is there any way that you (or your group) can help or support your MSHT contact in your country's response? For example, could you host an awareness-raising event, or could you raise some money towards the MSHT response?

Is there an area in which people in power could be doing better to prevent slavery and exploitation? Can you and those in your group write a letter advocating for change?