

Modern-Day Slavery: A fact sheet and call to action for local churches

Did you know?

Slavery still exists!

Slavery was officially abolished in the US in 1863 by the Emancipation Proclamation

Slavery is illegal in virtually every country in the world. However, although illegal, slavery is still a relatively common human practice in almost every country in the world.

More than 27 million people are currently enslaved

While the numbers shift constantly, and because slavery is underground it is difficult to assess, careful review suggests that more than 27,000,000 people are enslaved in the world today.

More than 50 thousand slaves are being used in the US

Reliable sources tell us that about 17,000 people are trafficked and forced into slavery each year in the US. The total slaves in the US at any given time number around 50,000. About 50% of slaves work in prostitution, about 30% in domestic service, 10% in agriculture, 5% in sweatshops, and 4% in restaurants. The other 1% is used in a variety of different types of work.

Given the number of slaves in the US and the varying kinds of work they do, chances are very good that someone you pass on a weekly basis is a slave or uses slaves.

Types of modern slavery

Trafficking

Trafficking is when a person is forced or tricked into moving for the economic gain of some other person. Trafficking is easy to confuse with smuggling since both involve illegal entry into a country.

Debt Bondage

The slave owes a debt to the slaveholder that they cannot reasonably be expected to pay back. Their lives become the collateral for the debt.

Debt bondage is often the result of a crisis in the life of the slave or the slave's family.

Forced Labor

Any slavery is forced labor; this refers to forced labor by a government or some official group.

This outrageous practice is still common in China, Myanmar, and Uzbekistan,

Issues around Slavery

Definition of slavery: Three parts

- Control through violence—Slaves are controlled by an overseer of some kind who uses force or threats of force to make the slave work.
- Economic exploitation—It is the overseer who benefits directly from the slaves work. The overseer may pay the slave something, but it won't be enough to allow freedom of movement.

- Loss of free will—The slave cannot leave or change work by choice.

Slavery is not a matter of ownership, race, color, or duration. Slaves come in every race and color of human being. Slavery is not necessarily a permanent condition. This provides the new abolitionist with hope!

Root causes

Spiritual

The root cause of slavery is a broken relationship with God. Because of the spiritual nature of this cause, it calls for prayer! One can pray more effectively when informed. Take time to use the resources below to build your own awareness of slavery, its causes, and effects. Help your congregation become aware of modern slavery and encourage them to join you in prayer.

Economic

While it is the overseer who benefits from slavery directly, we all benefit indirectly. The cases of slavery in production of coffee, chocolate, steel, and many other products are well documented. Unfortunately, a simple boycott often backfires.

Slavery is inextricably linked to poverty. The relationship of slavery to international debt is clear. Countries with large international debt don't have resources to spend on the social institutions of justice, education, and economic growth that tend to curb slavery. It's the crushing poverty of the individual that often forces them into slavery.

ACT!

- Build your own awareness and develop the awareness of your congregation.
 - Explore the resources listed below
 - Encourage a topical Sunday School class on slavery
- Promote Childcare International which has prevented the slavery of thousands of children
 - Include prayers for your adopted children in your morning worship
 - Provide opportunities for your congregation to adopt children
- Set aside a "Freedom Sunday" where you highlight the problems of slavery and celebrate our freedom in Christ!

Web Resources

Following are the websites for three of the main groups involved in modern abolition. They are full of helpful tools and practical ideas for action. Neither is faith-based, both are sympathetic to church groups.

<http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/> "Not for Sale" is a group formed by David Batstone.

<http://www.freetheslaves.net/Page.aspx?pid=183> This website is for the "Free the Slaves" group formed by Kevin Bales.

www.IJM.org International Justice Mission