TRUE FREEDOM

A NEW GLOBAL COURSE FOR LENT

#TRUEFREEDOM

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THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

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World Council of Churches

THE CALL TO DISCIPLES IN A WORLD OF MODERN SLAVERY - DRAWING ON THEMES FROM GALATIANS

FOREWORD - BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

I am delighted that The Clewer Initiative, on behalf of the Church of England, has worked with the World Council of Churches to produce a global Lent course to help Christians learn about the challenges of modern slavery and human trafficking. Based upon Paul's letter to the Galatians with its great theme of bondage and freedom, the course offers an opportunity for people to prayerfully consider how best they can make a creative contribution.

In a world of great darkness and suffering, I hope that our Lenten journey might unite and inspire Christians across the world to show the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

MANY FACTORS DRIVE MODERN SLAVERY WORLDWIDE:

- AN INCREASING NUMBER OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE
- AN INCREASING DISTANCE BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND THOSE WHO WORK FOR THEM
- THE DESIRE IN ALL OF US FOR CHEAP GOODS AND SERVICES
- THE INCREASING SOPHISTICATION OF CRIMINAL GANGS
- THE GLOBALISATION OF INDIFFERENCE
- THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND MASS MIGRATION

THE CALL TO DISCIPLES IN A WORLD OF MODERN SLAVERY - DRAWING ON THEMES FROM GALATIANS

INTRODUCTION FROM REV. DR KENNETH MTATA, WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, PUBLIC WITNESS AND DIAKONIA

It is my great joy and privilege to share this new Lent resource with the global fellowship of Churches. It builds on the experience of churches responding to modern slavery through the Church of England's The Clewer Initiative.

This is a result of collaboration among leaders and practitioners from across the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches.

For many of us, the thought of being commodified or objectified to the extent of being sold or bartered is not part of our experience, although it is entirely abhorrent to our psyche. Yet, documented evidence indicates that trafficking in persons (human trafficking or modern-day slavery) exists as both organised criminal behaviour and (il)/legal cultural practices across the globe.

Modern slavery affects people of all ages, ethnicities and social status and is the second highest level and one of the least detected aspects of organised crime globally. The Global Slavery Index (2021) reports that almost 50 million people were caught in the web of forced labour and/or forced (early) marriages, with women and girls accounting for more than 70 per cent of victims.

As people of faith, we have the responsibility to raise awareness of, and pursue actions to realise justice for those trapped in modern-day slavery. We are moved to act in our communities to be Jesus' hands and feet, protecting vulnerable people from exploitation, noticing victims and helping them find rescue, healing and reparation. As churches, we also play a key role in advocating for system changes, addressing the root causes of modern slavery, at all levels of decision-making.

During this Lenten season, we have a precious opportunity to respond to acts of modern slavery and trafficking in our own contexts and beyond. True Freedom provides insightful resources for six weeks of reflections, anchored in Paul's letter to the Galatians. It invites us to engage spiritually and practically about how we might address the drivers of modern slavery. It encourages us to become advocates for true justice and freedom today, for the sake of our children, women and men.

This resource is a starting point, and you may want to adapt it to your own contexts. We have tried to use examples from across the world, but every community is unique and will face different challenges and have different vulnerabilities.

May our Lord Jesus Christ who was treated so unjustly, awaken our resolve this Lent.

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World Council of Churches

THE CALL TO DISCIPLES IN A WORLD OF MODERN SLAVERY - DRAWING ON THEMES FROM GALATIANS

INTRODUCTION FROM BISHOP ALASTAIR REDFERN, THE CHAIR OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

Lent is the season when, as Christians, we try to more self-consciously walk the way of the cross, exploring the mystery of our Lord suffering, his confrontation with the sin of the world and the failings of religion.

In this season, it can be helpful to study God's word, our lives, and the needs of the world in more depth. That is our aim in this Lenten course

We invite you to join us in reading Paul's letter to the Galatians over the six weeks of Lent.
Our resource does not provide a detailed textual study – hundreds of others have done this already – but instead explores the great themes of freedom and bondage, the role of grace and law, and the marks of the new life in the Spirit and how these ideas inform our fight against modern slavery.

As we consider our lives in communities across the globe, it is a tragic fact that modern slavery and human trafficking are growing relentlessly in every society.

Many factors drive this inhuman crime:

- an increasing number of vulnerable people who can be susceptible to false promises and desperate for money
- an increasing distance between employers and those who work for them plus the growth in agency working and long and complex supply chains
- the desire in all of us for cheap goods and services. The key is the low price, not how anything has been produced
- the increasing sophistication of criminal gangs
- what Pope Francis calls the globalisation of indifference. We are all so busy trying to look after ourselves, often looking at our screens, that we don't notice others

For Christians, the story of the Good Samaritan reminds us that we are called to notice the suffering of those ignored by the rest of society. Jesus begins his gospel in Luke 4 with a call to care for the oppressed, and when he summarises his entire ministry in Matthew 25, he is clear that the test of our witness is to be measured by whether or not we have cared for those who are hurting. Our Lent course is an invitation to test our own faithfulness as witnesses of Jesus Christ in the context in which He has placed us.

The Clewer Initiative has been developing resources for the Church of England, the Anglican Communion and partner churches for a number of years. It is an enormous privilege to be able to collaborate with the World Council of Churches to try to make this act of witness together during Lent.

As Paul says to the Galatians:

> "it is for freedom that Christ has set us free" so that "we can do good to all people" and "not grow weary of doing right." May God bless us in all our endeavours, so that more of his children can taste the glory of his freedom, and the world become a safer and more worthy place."

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HOW THE COURSE WORKS

Each session consists of the following elements:

- An opening paragraph, sharing the theme of the week and introductory information about modern slavery
- A modern slavery fact file, helping you understand the scale of the issue
- One or two case studies telling the story of a victim of modern slavery – some of these have been filmed and can be watched during or after the session
- The bible reading – a chapter from Galatians
- A reflection, written by Revd Dr Kenneth Mtata (WCC Programme Director for Public Witness and Diakonia) and Bishop Alastair Redfern (Chair of The Clewer Initiative), and drawing on themes from a chapter in the book of Galatians
- A set of questions to encourage discussion and reflection
- An opportunity to look at two contemporary illustrations and consider how they add to your understanding of the theme
- A prayer
- A story of hope
- Some action points

LEADING A GROUP

If you are leading a group, we would encourage you to review the material before each session begins so you feel confident about the focus. When you gather, you could work through the following steps:

- Open in prayer – you could use one of the prayers we have drafted on pages 8-9.
- Take turns to read each section of the session.
- It could be useful to pause for a time of contemplation or reflection, and have a brief moment of silence, allowing space for exploration, imagination, and prayerfulness.
- Where there are films linked to the case studies, consider watching these together as they will help bring the issue to life.
- When you reach the discussion section, there are no right or wrong answers. This is an opportunity to share your thoughts, feelings and questions and begin the process of understanding what modern slavery and exploitation looks like in your context. We have tried to use examples from around the world but, by definition, modern slavery looks different in every community. No two victims are the same and no two perpetrators operate in the same way.
- Feel free to adapt the material to your own context and bring your own expertise and stories to the sessions – you may want to consider if there is anyone in your community you could invite to be a part of the group to bring their frontline expertise to the table. For example, a local schoolteacher, police officer, social worker or charity worker.
- It may be helpful to have large sheets of paper available so you can brainstorm ideas / write down your questions / help people think of concrete action points. You could bring these papers every week and keep adding to them so you have a record of your discussions and hopes.
- Close in prayer.

THE CALL TO DISCIPLES IN A WORLD OF MODERN SLAVERY - DRAWING ON THEMES FROM GALATIANS

ABOUT THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

The Clewer Initiative was established in 2016 and is the national work of the Church of England to combat modern slavery. It exists to raise awareness and mobilise the Church and communities to take action against modern slavery, to promote victim identification and to provide victim care and support.

Based on our belief that the tools to tackle modern slavery lie within communities, we work with local churches to build resilience and support vulnerable groups. We also work at a national and international level through a range of partnerships and collaborations raising awareness and developing practical tools and resources for use by churches, communities, partners and the public.

ABOUT THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The World Council of Churches brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 120 countries and territories throughout the world, representing more than 580 million Christians.

As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches are called to:

- the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship
- promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism
- engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation
- foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

MODERN SLAVERY INCLUDES

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

FORCED LABOUR

DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

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THE CALL TO DISCIPLES IN A WORLD OF MODERN SLAVERY - DRAWING ON THEMES FROM GALATIANS

STORIES

Throughout the resource we have shared stories from the frontlines. Because modern slavery is a global issue, we have tried to gather case studies from every continent but inevitably there are more examples from the UK where The Clewer Initiative has been pioneering projects for the last seven years.

We would love to hear what you are doing to fight modern slavery and exploitation in your community and to keep sharing stories of modern slavery activism in different contexts.

CARING FOR YOURSELF

This resource is about a subject which is emotive and upsetting. Before you start, think about how you will care for yourself and others. If you are distressed by the subject matter or it has triggered painful memories, we would urge you to share your feelings with others who might understand.

HOW TO RESPOND WELL

Here are some tips to help you respond well if someone tells you about a concern they have:

- Work within the law and expectations in your country/local area
- Treat children and vulnerable people respectfully
- Listen
- Be clear what you are going to do next
- Seek support from a leader.

TRUE FREEDOM WEEK BY WEEK GUIDE

True Freedom is a six week, interactive Lent course. Each week draws on themes from a chapter in the book of Galatians and explores how they relate to modern slavery.

WEEK 1

GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

We will look at how criminals entice vulnerable people and make false promises and how this contrasts with the wonderful call of the gospel.

WEEK 2

GALATIANS 2 - COMMODITIES OR CHILDREN OF GOD?

We will see how people are commodified and not viewed as precious children of God.

WEEK 3

GALATIANS 3 - THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

We will consider the limitations of the law and the role of the global church in speaking up against injustice and lobbying for change.

WEEK 4

GALATIANS 4 - THE VALUE OF FAMILIES

We will reflect on the value of families and the tragedy of broken and fragmented neighbourhoods.

WEEK 5

GALATIANS 5 - THE NATURE OF TRUE FREEDOM

We will explore our shared responsibility to care for the vulnerable and walk closely with the broken-hearted.

WEEK 6

GALATIANS 6 - THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

We will reflect on the life of a disciple and the need to persevere for the long haul as we walk in the Spirit and enjoy our freedom as children of God.

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DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER

The Psalmist declares:

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. worthy place.

(Psalm 127: 1)

We long for the True Freedom course to make a difference across the world in fighting modern slavery and exploitation. If this is to happen, our actions and resolutions must be underpinned in prayer.

We have written six prayers to inspire your intercessions. Please make use of them before, during and after each session.

A PRAYER BEFORE THE START OF EACH SESSION

As we gather for our Bible study and prayer, make us mindful of the many blessings we enjoy, and open our eyes to see the needs of your children, trapped in slavery, trafficking, and exploitation. May our blessings become a source of your saving grace to others. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

A PRAYER OF LAMENT

Holy God, we repent of the part we have played in allowing this dreadful crime to become established in our communities. We are sorry for our apathy, indifference and busyness. We lament our sin and selfishness. We join our cries for help to all the hidden voices of your children suffering from criminal exploitation. As we learn to recognise and share their pain, may we be brought closer to all around us who are hurting in this way, so that together we may be ready to know your healing love. We pray through Jesus, who walked the way of suffering to bring new life to all, Amen.

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Holy Father, help us to dedicate ourselves to your service, through reaching out to those in whom your image is being damaged. May we be inspired to review the priorities and practices which shape our own lives, so we can offer more time and resource to serving you through this special calling. We ask in the name of Jesus, who gave himself for others, that your will may be one. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR RESILIENCE

Lord God, give us the courage and commitment to persevere when we face challenges and setbacks in this special calling. Let our hearts be rooted in you, and the cries of your exploited children, so that we may be inspired to continue in the journey to which you call us. Teach us to trust in your power and your presence, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the worldwide family of the church, and for the privilege of being a part of your Body in the world. May we be nourished by your word, your sacraments, and the fellowship through which hope, mercy and grace can be shared, so that our witness of love for others may be according to your will, and follow in the way of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR VICTIMS

Most merciful Father, we raise our prayers to you for the increasing number of victims of slavery and trafficking. Whisper hope into their ears and wipe away their tears. Help us see them and support them. Enable our communities to transform the systems which increase poverty and make so many people vulnerable to exploitation. Inspire our church communities to tackle the root causes of modern slavery so that hurt may be healed, despair becomes hope, and isolation become fellowship – through our suffering saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

WEEK 1 GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

MODERN SLAVERY FACT FILE*

THERE ARE PEOPLE LIVING IN MODERN SLAVERY either forced to work against their will or in a marriage into which they were forced.

THE 2021 FIGURES SHOW A INCREASE OF

10 MILLION

since the previous estimates were released in 2017.

CHILDREN MAKE UP NEARLY A QUARTER OF THESE PEOPLE.

Some children are sent down mines, forced to work in fields or sweatshops or trapped as domestic slaves in private homes. Others are forced into marriage, sexual exploitation, begging or selling drugs.

*Data from https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/global-findings/

THE CALL OF THE CRIMINALS

Modern slavery is a crime that encompasses both trafficking (the arranging or facilitating of the travel of someone with a view to exploiting them) and exploitation itself. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic servitude and exploitation in criminal activity.

Exploiters may be part of a large criminal organisation, a smaller operation or lone offenders. They target vulnerable individuals and lure them into exploitation often by force, coercion or deceit. They promise a better life, employment, a sense of belonging or identity but sadly it is all lies and victims are forced to work in difficult and degrading conditions, with little or no pay.

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WEEK 1 GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

READ MIHAIL'S STORY

I come from Riga in Latvia. My dad was sick. We had no money to help him. We were desperate. I heard about a guy who was helping people get work. He said "sure I can help you. I'll pay for your ticket to the UK – help get you a job – then you pay me back when you're working, plus a small fee. You can send money home for your sick dad." I thought he was my friend.

We got on a plane, when we arrive at the airport we go to his car. He drives me a long time and then we get out. I don't know where. It's dark. He takes me to a building, shows me a room, it's filthy, a mattress on the floor, one stinking blanket. "You sleep there", he says. "Tomorrow you work." He takes my passport. He says you don't tell anybody where you're from – talk to no one.

The next day I start work in a poultry factory. I have no money so I don't eat. Every day the same, sometimes they feed me at night, sometimes nothing at all. No showers. I'm working hard but I owe them for my plane ticket, my room, the shitty food, the fee and so I have no money, nothing to send home.

They take all my wages. If you speak about this we'll kill you and we'll hurt your family. I don't speak the language anyway. To the building site and home and back to my dirty room. This is my life for two years. Just wearing the clothes I arrive in, filthier and filthier.

Then one day someone noticed me. They knew something was wrong. They took me to the HR department who phoned the police. A modern slavery worker helped me get away. The first thing I did was phone my family. Now I work in a new place with real friends who don't exploit me. My money is my own. I can send money every month to help my family. I can travel wherever I like. Except I am still scared to go near the place I was kept. That still gives me nightmares.

Watch Mihail's story on YouTube

https://youtu.be/3Am4Vwqj2qk?si=0yzcfSCPBdU5sSn2

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WEEK 1 GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

REFLECTION

Read Galatians 1

> But God, who set me apart from my mother's womb... called me by his grace.

In Chapter 1 of Galatians, the Apostle Paul tells the story of how his life was turned upside down by an invitation from Jesus. He was zealous for his Jewish faith (v14) and set on destroying the church (v13) until God intervened on the road to Damascus. He was "called by grace" (v15) and sent to preach the gospel among the Gentiles (v16). This voice or call was good news for him. It transformed his life and vocation.

We are in a world where there are so many different voices competing for our attention. We are bombarded by calls from advertisers, influencers, politicians, friends, family, church leaders. It can be hard to know who to listen to and what is the truth. Amongst this cacophony of voices, criminals operate. They add their voices and false promises to the melee, calling out to vulnerable people: "Do you want a job? Do you want a great future? I love you. Come away with me."

Often the voice of the criminal sounds like an offer of grace. It comes out of the blue, in the midst of poverty, and promises new life. Sadly, it is a false call. If something sounds "too good to be true," it usually is. Only one call is truly good and that is the call of Jesus. He offers rescue from the present evil age (v4), grace and true freedom whereas the call from the criminal traps and enslaves.

Our role is to listen to the different voices and learn to discern the false promises and lies. As community members, we need to notice one another, know one another and care enough about each other to see when the criminals are getting a foothold. We need to help vulnerable people in our community see through the lies and see the scam behind the offer.

WEEK 1 GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What vulnerabilities do criminals prey on when they "call" victims? What sort of promises do they offer?
- How can we equip people to discern the difference between false promises and the Truth?
- To what extent do you feel a responsibility for the vulnerable people in your community to help them resist the call of criminals?
- Discuss the phrase "too good to be true." How is it a helpful motto when seeking to protect people from the lies of criminal gangs?

PRAYER

Father of All, guide each of us in our own vocation, and assist us to help others hear your call and know your presence. May you lead us to pay special attention to all whose lives are being damaged by false promises and criminal exploitation. Please enable us to notice, hear, reach out and respond, in the power of your love, we pray.

Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

What do you see in these images?

When, where and how are people in your community hearing false calls?

WEEK 1 GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

EXPERT INSIGHT – WHAT FACTORS MAKE PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO LABOUR EXPLOITATION?

The University of Nottingham's Rights Lab and De Montfort University interviewed workers in the garment and textile industry in Leicester (UK) about their working conditions and expectations. The report outlines a number of reasons why these workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation:

- A general lack of understanding of employment rights: the industry is predominately run by and employs members from one particular ethnic community. "Because of their close knit nature, and the racism and isolation that many have experienced" links between workers and factory owners are close. In addition, many workers are encouraged to recruit friends, while others pay fees to obtain employment. This affects workers' discernment – if family or friends have encouraged them into the job, they may feel unable to speak out. Interestingly, Romanian and Bulgarian workers are reportedly more likely to engage with informal and formal worker organisations to protect pay and conditions than workers from South Asia.
- Poverty – where financial need is acute, vulnerability to exploitation can increase. Leicester City is in the 20% of Local Authorities in England with the highest levels of disadvantage
- Widespread inability to speak the language compounds the vulnerabilities of this community, along with precarities concerning immigration status – one in three of Leicester's garment workers were born outside of the UK and do not necessarily have legal work status
- The informality of the industry makes monitoring compliance more difficult – many garment industry homeworkers within Leicester get paid as little as £2 per hour
- A perceived lack of options – workers described not being able to obtain other work due to a lack of English-language, a lack of skills or qualifications, not knowing about other jobs or how to find other jobs, not having transport to other jobs, and personal circumstances

All of the above has resulted in the normalisation of exploitative work practices. This research centres on the garment industry in Leicester but many of its observations and recommendations could apply worldwide. To read the report in full, click here.

WEEK 1 GALATIANS 1 - THE CALL OF THE CRIMINAL V. THE CALL OF CHRIST

STORIES OF HOPE – DEVELOPING A RESOURCE TO REACH OUT TO UKRAINIANS

After the war in Ukraine began, The Clewer Initiative developed a Ukrainian Toolkit to help Ukrainian refugees understand the potential threat of exploitation. It included case studies from Ukrainians and information on employment rights as well as advice on how to keep safe. The resource has been rolled out in the UK. Watch this short film to see how the resource has helped refugees understand the false callings they may be subject to.

This is a great example of how the church can protect vulnerable people and raise awareness of exploitation. Could you create something similar to help a particular group within your community discern false callings?

ACTION POINT – HOW TO SPOT THE SIGNS OF MODERN SLAVERY AND EXPLOITATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Exploitation looks different in every community. Look at the poster "Signs of Modern Slavery" in our Appendix or online and consider whether these signs apply in your context. Could you design something similar for your community and begin displaying it in communal areas?

MODERN SLAVERY FACT FILE

COMMODITIES OR CHILDREN OF GOD?

When criminal gangs see vulnerable people, they don't see individuals made in the image of God, they see "dollar signs." Modern slavery is almost unique in the fact that the source of the revenue never runs out. Victims can be exploited over and over, creating an ongoing source of profit for the criminal gangs who stand behind it. It is difficult to ascertain the size of the industry but the International Labor Organisation has estimated it generates at least $150 billion for traffickers annually.

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WEEK 2 GALATIANS 2 - COMMODITIES OR CHILDREN OF GOD?

READ RAYOWA'S STORY

I was born in Nigeria. My family was poor and my parents struggled to feed us. One day, when I was nine, my mum and dad said to me "do you want to go to Europe, live there with relatives go to school, plenty to eat?" I was so excited. Because life was too hard and maybe I could be a help to my family.

When I got off the plane a woman met me. She had her children with her. She didn't smile. She didn't look like my family. I became afraid. We got to her house. She told me I had come here with the passport of a girl called Aaminna and that is who I was now. She told me I mustn't tell anyone how I came or how I worked in the house or I would never see my family again. It was now my life to cook, clean, look after the children, do the shopping, the washing, while she sat all day and drank coffee. If I did something wrong, she hit me. She didn't feed me enough food. I worked long hours and I was not allowed to contact my family.

I thought maybe they had died. I was lonely. I missed my family. I cried all the time. Lots of people in the flats knew I wasn't really their child and that I was being treated badly but no one did anything.

I begged to go to school. I wanted to learn. Eventually my mistress let me go but I was always behind. My favourite lesson was cooking. I loved being with my teacher. I felt safe. One day I told a friend I just couldn't go on anymore she said to me the teacher. I was scared but I stayed behind after class and I found the courage to speak. The teacher listened and she believed me. She called social services and they took me from that house where I was a slave and placed me with a good family. I was 14.

Watch Rayowa's story on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKLhGBXubYI

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WEEK 2 GALATIANS 2 - COMMODITIES OR CHILDREN OF GOD?

REFLECTION

Read Galatians 2

> James, Peter and John gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

Chapter 2 of Galatians focuses on some of the categories and divisions that existed amongst the people of God in Paul's lifetime – Titus is Greek, Peter works amongst the Jews, Barnabas and Paul work amongst the Gentiles. There are labels, factions, confusion, hypocrisy and false brothers getting in the way of the gospel cause. At the heart of the conflict is the issue of identity and seeing people as different or opposite. Even today, factions and cliques still exist within gospel communities.

Paul wants to speak into these challenges and help the church in Galatia, and the global church today, think about one another differently. He is strident in his preaching. He argues that "a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ." All that matters is whether someone is in Christ – all other distinctions are irrelevant. And when you become a Christian, that is the lens through which you see yourself and others: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

We need to transcend the groups and distinctions in our communities and start seeing everyone as equal – either in Christ or not yet in Christ.

We need to see how wrong it is to, like Peter, draw back and separate ourselves from people who are different to us (v12). The truth of the gospel calls us to sit with people and eat with them, despite our diverse backgrounds. We need to follow in the footsteps of James, Peter and John (v9) and offer the "right hand of fellowship" to all people, overcoming difference and "otherness."

The reason why modern slavery is thriving in our world is that vast quantities of people have vanished into the shadows and become invisible. In the eyes of the criminals, they are just commodities or objects to exploit. They have no identity, status or value. Through the eyes of the passive majority, they are either not seen or when they are seen, people don't care, are apathetic or ignorant about what to do. Every day, the parable of The Good Samaritan is re-enacted on our streets. Most people walk on by (like the Priest and the Levite), choosing to pretend that the vulnerable do not exist. Few take action like the Samaritan (Luke 10).

The call of Christ is to open our eyes and see. It is to offer the right hand of fellowship to people who are currently in the most vulnerable places in our communities and help them find freedom. Isaiah 58 challenges God's people to "loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"

Paul provides a wonderful example for us – his love for Jesus Christ compelled him to preach the gospel amongst people he had previously hated and persecuted. His view of other people, particularly those from a different race and culture, was totally transformed by his new faith. We are called to the same radical way of life. Reaching out to people who are different to us and who exist outside of our normal circles.

WEEK 2 GALATIANS 2 - COMMODITIES OR CHILDREN OF GOD?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where do you see people being treated as commodities, rather than children of God?
- How is God calling you to see people differently, now that you are in Christ?
- Sometimes modern slavery involves transferring people across borders and sometimes it is just local. When people are on the move, they share different types of vulnerability. Discuss some of the different vulnerabilities you are aware of.

PRAYER

Lord God Almighty, help us to join together with other Christians and all people of goodwill in challenging the cruel systems that entrap and abuse so many of our sisters and brothers in modern slavery. May we learn to look with care at all the means by which we receive goods and services, and support every endeavour to insist upon proper checks and processes, so that those hidden in exploitation may be shown the light of your saving power. For Jesus' sake.

Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

How do these images make you feel?
When are you in danger of overlooking people?
What divisions exist within your community?

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WEEK 2 GALATIANS 2 - COMMODITIES OR CHILDREN OF GOD?

STORIES OF HOPE – A SUNFLOWER PROJECT THAT GENERATES EMPLOYMENT AND REDUCES POVERTY

A team from The Clewer Initiative in the UK visited Tanzania in 2023 to see what anti-slavery work was taking place at the grassroots.

In the Diocese of Western Tanganyika (DWT), the Diocese has identified poverty as a key vulnerability for exploitation. As a result, it is running a sunflower project which is encouraging farmers to grow sunflowers and the Diocese will provide the facilities for processing the seeds. This will reduce poverty and vulnerability to exploitation and is an excellent example of the church leading the way in pioneering change.

ACTION POINT – RESPONSIBLE CONSUMERISM

- How in your own communities can you go about discovering whether the things being bought and sold involve slavery and exploitation?
- When you think about obtaining goods or services, resolve not always to buy the cheapest but to care about the people behind the products. Could you ask for assurances from companies or suppliers that everyone in the chain has been treated fairly and paid properly?
- What products or services does your church buy regularly? How can you check your suppliers are slavery free?

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MODERN SLAVERY FACT FILE

The Walk Free Global Slavery Index outlines what governments across the world are doing to fight modern slavery.

It reveals that nearly 150 countries have a National Action Plan related to some form of modern slavery

– A 30 PER CENT INCREASE SINCE 2018.

35 COUNTRIES

have now set the age of marriage to 18 for girls and boys with no exception

50 COUNTRIES

have now criminalised forced marriage, an increase of 12 since the last report.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

Legislation is essential but it can only go so far. It is also vital that knowledge about modern slavery cascades down from governments and legislators to communities. Police, teachers, medical professionals and others who may encounter victims of modern slavery need to be trained to know what it is and how to spot the signs. They also need to know what to do to care for victims appropriately.

However, we don't just need better laws and leaders, we also need to raise up better citizens who love their neighbours and care about the vulnerable people in their midst. In particular, the law and governments require individuals and institutions like churches to notice what is going on around them, provide evidence and make reports to the correct organisations if they suspect criminal activity.

This is where "keeping people safe" or "safeguarding" comes in and churches can lead the way in this.

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WEEK 3 GALATIANS 3 - THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

DEFINITION OF SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is about protecting the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults, so that they can live free from abuse, harm and neglect. It is also about knowing what to do when you suspect someone is being harmed.

Churches also have a vital role in preventing exploitation in the first place. They can help underline people's inherent value, worth and dignity and their right to safety and communicate the importance of looking after yourself and keeping safe. This preventative work can be incredibly powerful and effective.

Finally, the Church has a unique role in speaking up and championing justice at the highest level. We can use our prophetic voice to challenge existing norms and share the realities of what we observe on the ground with Government and international organisations. For example, victims of modern slavery often do not come forward to the authorities because they fear deportation or imprisonment. In light of this, the Church could speak up for victims of slavery and encourage governments to view them with compassion.

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READ ANITA'S STORY

I grew up in a traditional family in Albania. When I was 14, I met someone at college and fell in love. He brought me gifts. He said he loved me. But my family wanted me to marry someone else. So my boyfriend and I ran away to Rome. I rang my family but they disowned me.

In Rome, my boyfriend became a different person. He said "I belonged to him" – forcing me to perform sexual acts. Then one day he left and never came back. Another man came to the hotel room with a gun and told me that he'd paid my boyfriend for me and if I didn't come with him, he'd kill me. He moved me to another city, and then another country. I was forced to have sex with whoever he told me to - so many different men in different flats. We were constantly being moved around. There were a number of girls with me but no one from my country.

No one spoke my language. We lived in terrible cramped conditions. Some of us got pregnant from the sex. I was forced to see more and more clients in filthy bedrooms. I had nowhere to go, no clothes except for the sex worker clothes. I felt so ashamed – abandoned by my family, betrayed by my boyfriend. Working seven days a week like an animal – no phone, no ID. And he told me that I would get in trouble if I ran away or told anyone. Then the police raided the house – I didn't even know which part of the country I was in. They took me to a safe house and I received medical attention for the injuries I'd received. Now I slowly start to rebuild my life. I can't forget the past but I hope for a future.

Watch Anita's story on YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnWtHR1cHdU&t

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WEEK 3 GALATIANS 3 - THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

REFLECTION

Read Galatians 3

> If a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

Chapter 3 of Galatians discusses the failings of the Jewish Law and how Scripture has always taught that people would be saved by faith. Paul teaches that the law has a role in leading us to Christ (v24) but it cannot impart life (v21). In fact, "all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse" (v10) and Christ has died to redeem us from this curse so we can experience the blessing of righteousness by faith and life in the Spirit (v14).

This is a helpful introduction to the idea that the law and legal systems have limitations. While we long for governments across the world to institute robust laws that protect the vulnerable and prosecute the perpetrators of crime, they can only go so far. No law can change people's hearts and address the deep selfishness within mankind. Galatians 3 describes that the "whole world is a prisoner of sin" (v22). Only justification by faith and life in the Spirit can bring about the deep transformation of the heart that our world so desperately needs.

The gospel brings real change and recovery and Paul celebrates it in these famous verses: "in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (v26-28).

This is dynamite – in Christ, all barriers are gone. Everyone is equal and precious and united in Christ. In this context, modern slavery will not work because it only thrives when people are divided and alienated from one another.

The gospel message is the hope our communities need and the true source of freedom. It can drive change at a deeper level than law and governments could only ever dream of. The gospel offers a vital contribution to the recovery of our world.

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WEEK 3 GALATIANS 3 - THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What laws exist within your country to protect and support victims of modern slavery?
- What are the limitations of the law?
- How can gospel communities offer something that the law of the land could never achieve?
- How could the church in your country make a difference in advocating for better policies and better practices?

PRAYER

Gracious God, we praise you that in Jesus, all your children are called to be one. As we seek to play our part as responsible citizens, to support laws which protect the vulnerable and prosecute exploiting criminality, help us to recognise the importance of example and generosity in local communities, workplaces and educational enterprises . We thank you for sending Jesus to act as your law of love in daily lives, and we ask your guidance to repeat this witness, especially in those places where people are hurting and crying out for your healing. Hear us, and hear all who seek your grace.

Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

Where do you see the law and Government working effectively in your community?
Where could the church use its prophetic voice to speak out?

WE SEE YOU.
THE CLEWER INITIATIVE
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WEEK 3 GALATIANS 3 - THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

STORIES OF HOPE – HELPING CHURCHES ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE

The WCC regularly helps churches lift up their voices and observations on violations of the law and human rights, through interventions and reporting to the United Nations Human Rights mechanisms. For example, in Nigeria, the WCC carried out a series of workshops in the country with both adults and children (on separate days so that the children would be more comfortable to speak without the adults in the room). The WCC then submitted a compilation of their concerns and recommendations ahead of the review taking place in Geneva. Three members of the Nigerian church came to Geneva to spotlight the challenges that children, and particularly girls, face in their society. Twelve recommendations were made to the Government of Nigeria based on what the children had reported.

Similarly, in Jamaica, the WCC ran a training of trainers and invited those (adult) representatives to run workshops with the children in their churches to gather their views. The WCC then submitted the compiled report to the UN ahead of the review of Jamaica. A young person from Jamaica shared some of their observations at an online meeting of 50 representatives from different Governments.

In 2020, the WCC, UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities, and the European Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace organised a conference exploring ways to protect children affected by migration. Delegates considered the role the church has in welcoming the stranger and caring for the neighbour, and brainstormed solutions for protecting children affected by migration within the European context. For more information, visit **https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/faith-action-conference-report**

These are just a few examples of how the WCC helps churches advocate for justice and protect and promote human rights.

ACTION POINT – DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDING TOOLKIT

A team from The Clewer Initiative in the UK recently visited the Diocese of Western Tanganyika (DWT) in Tanzania. The purpose of the trip was to develop a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) Safeguarding toolkit for use internationally. The toolkit will help worshipping communities establish good child welfare practices and enable them to recognise and respond to concerns and reduce risks relating to MSHT in their communities.

Representatives from the Diocesan team in the DWT were interviewed and the findings from 11 child welfare seminars analysed. The seminars took place at Anglican churches over a 2-week period. The attendees were a range of people from the church community and local government leaders. There were 1,068 attendees in total across the 11 seminars.

The resulting toolkit is designed to be used by senior leaders to help them ensure there is a good foundation for worshipping communities to raise awareness and ensure projects are run safely and act on MSHT. The content can be followed and contextualised to individual communities.

Review the Toolkit – who could you show this material to? How could it be used to train key leaders in your church?

WEEK 4 GALATIANS 4 - THE VALUE OF FAMILIES

MODERN SLAVERY FACT FILE

EVERY YEAR, 12 MILLION GIRLS MARRY BEFORE THE AGE OF 18.

The true incidence of forced marriage, particularly involving children aged 16 and younger, is likely however to be far greater.

Among child victims, 44 per cent were forced to marry

BEFORE THE AGE OF 15 YEARS.

Some victims are as young as 9.

Early marriage and forced marriage is highest in Sub-Saharan Africa where

38 PER CENT OF GIRLS BECOME CHILD BRIDES.

IN SOUTH ASIA, 30% OF GIRLS EXPERIENCE EARLY MARRIAGE,

compared with 25% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 17% in the Middle East and North Africa, and 11% in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

THE VALUE OF FAMILIES

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union and victims are often subjected to pressure, abuse or coercion. This is why it is a form of modern slavery. None of the major world religions support forced marriage. Forced marriage is different from arranged marriages, which are a common practice all over the world.

In some cultures, children are encouraged or forced into 'early marriage'. Many factors lead to this – poverty, the belief that marriage will provide 'protection', family honour, social norms and local customs or religious beliefs. The overwhelming majority of forced marriages (more than 85 per cent) are driven by family pressure.

Girls who marry early are more likely to experience violence, abuse and forced sexual relations due to unequal power relations. They are also more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections. Married girls are unlikely to attend school and education plays a key role in giving girls choices and opportunities in life and helping them break the cycle of poverty.

While the age of consent varies in different cultures and religions, we should be urging all families to consider "what is in the best interest of the child?" Global church communities can lead the way in starting this difficult conversation and promoting the freedom and welfare of all children.

WEEK 4 GALATIANS 4 - THE VALUE OF FAMILIES

READ FLORA'S STORY

Shared by Esther Muhagachi
(Christian Council of Tanzania)

Early marriage is an issue in Tanzania, especially in places where female genital mutilation (FGM) is prevalent. After receiving training from The Clewer Initiative, we began conducting follow-ups and discovered that many girls in our area face numerous challenges. We met a girl named Flora, who was forced into marriage at the age of 10 while she was still in Grade 5. The man was 30 years old and he gave eight cows to her family.

Flora explains: "I didn't even know this man, but I was forced to marry him. I stopped going to school and started a life with this man whom I don't love. I stayed with him for seven days. Then I decided to run away. I ran at night and sought help. My mother is a single mother and I couldn't return home because this man had given the cows to my mother, and I wasn't sure if she still had them. Thankfully, I received help from the gender desk, and I was rescued. The man was made to return his cows, and I went back to school. However, my life was still difficult. After completing grade seven, I was married again, but this time, I went to a faraway village because I was ashamed of what had happened. Now I have a baby boy, but I still don't like men, and I am not happy at all. I am not loved. I pray that this doesn't happen to any other girl."

REFLECTION

Read Galatians 4

> "You are the God who sees me."

In Chapter 4, we are reminded of the story of Abram, Sarah and their servant, Hagar. From Genesis 16, we read of the ill-treatment, resentment, tension, rivalry and suffering that ensues after Abram sleeps with Hagar. Abram doesn't care how Hagar is treated: "Do with her whatever you think best" (Gen 16:6). Sarai mistreats Hagar and she runs away. While her household don't care for her, the LORD "hears her misery" (Gen 16:11) and she responds by calling him "the One who sees me" (v13). This provides beautiful insight into the heart of God and comfort for all victims of slavery.

Later in Chapter 21, Hagar is, like many victims of slavery, abandoned, impoverished and close to death. She is in the Desert of Beersheba with her son: "When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."

WEEK 4 GALATIANS 4 - THE VALUE OF FAMILIES

Again, the God of the Bible hears the cries of his people and provides for them. This sorry saga shows us the full horror of slavery in households. The ramifications of Abram and Sarah's mistreatment of Hagar echo down through history. There is much to learn and repent of. We need to see the value of our families and the importance of having integrity at the heart of our homes. Families have a powerful role in cementing society and families that are misled or corrupt can have a devastating impact.

Often, modern slavery flourishes because our neighbourhoods and families are fragmenting. We need to restore our vision for families and caring for everyone in our household, particularly those in our employment. If households are loving and inclusive, we will relate to any domestic servants in the right way, maintaining the integrity and witness of our households.

God calls us to imitate him and listen out for the cries of his children. We must hear the calls of those pushed into the desert of modern slavery. We must also repent of when we have not been the loving and inclusive family that God calls us to.

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WEEK 4 GALATIANS 4 - THE VALUE OF FAMILIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who is in your household?
- How do you view and treat the people you employ?
- How do you view the role of the family in fighting modern slavery?
- How is the family unit being undermined in your society?
- How can you strengthen relationships within your family and household so individuals are able to resist the call of criminals?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you call us to be children in your Household of Faith. Teach us to value the sanctuaries of family and community, through which we learn to love our neighbours as ourselves, and as we make this witness, may we be enabled to show special care to children in forced labour and sexual exploitation, and all those misled into domestic slavery. May your gift of family and friendship be ever more embracing, including and generous . We pray in the name of your son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

What do you see in these images?

Families can be places of safety and care. However, sometimes they are places of abuse and exploitation. What do you think leads to these different scenarios?

STORIES OF HOPE - INVESTING IN AND CARING FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN URUGUAY

The Obra Ecuménica Center, an educational centre for children and adolescents, was created by the Methodist Church, Valdensian Church, Lutheran Church and German Church, 45 years ago. It is located in an extremely poor neighbourhood, north of Montevideo in Uruguay.

More than half (57%) of households have one or more unsatisfied basic needs – the most significant shortcomings have to do with housing conditions and overcrowding of homes. The level of education of the population of Casavalle is also generally low and this affects people's ability to find work.

Every day, the centre receives 53 children and 130 adolescents for classes, vocational training, counselling, creative workshops and training in nonviolent communication. There is a team of 40 employees and many volunteers who offer and coordinate a large variety of activities for children who dropped out of the formal school system. Overall, it reaches around 600 families a year.

"Most of those who come to the centre are deeply affected by violence in their families, others do not have a family and live in gangs," a team member explains. "As most of them did not succeed in the formal school system, our first priority in the workshops is to help them develop the taste for learning and progressing again."

Professional psychologists, educators and social workers accompany each of them in their journey and help them develop a vision for their future that breaks the cycle of violence and drug wars which characterise this district.

Twenty per cent of the children who come to the centre are in conflict with the law; others are victims of human trafficking. All the children have at least one person in their family who was killed in shootings, or someone who is in prison.

"When we are in the Obra Ecuménica we feel safe, and we learn things which can help us to find a better future," a young boy says. He has come to the centre for the last five years.

The Obra Ecuménica also has a special programme for children with disabilities, of which there are many in this district, a much higher percentage than in the rest of Uruguay.

In the midst of fear, violence and killings between gangs, the "Obra Ecuménica Barrio Borro" is an island of peace and hope for children and teenagers.

STORIES OF HOPE – STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE UK

County lines is one of the most prevalent forms of modern slavery in the UK. It is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store and transport drugs from big cities to suburban and rural areas.

The Clewer Initiative became increasingly aware of the scale of county lines following discussions at a Hidden Voices group it was facilitating. As a result, it created a ground-breaking training course called Breaking County Lines which it has since delivered to hundreds of church leaders, school teachers, youth workers and social workers. The course flowed directly out of The Clewer Initiative's community work and has proven so popular that The Clewer Initiative has adapted it for other groups such as parents, grandparents, carers and foster parents.

As well as raising awareness of county lines and educating people on how to spot the signs of its presence, the course looks at ways of building resilience in communities and protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults. This is a good example of how the church can lead the way in strengthening families and communities.

What is the equivalent in your context? Could you design something similar that might help spotlight vulnerable children and the importance of community resilience?

ACTION POINT

Invite your church community to discuss the importance of the family in the modern world. What kind of teaching needs to be developed to help strengthen relationships within families and protect those who might be vulnerable to a false call?

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WEEK 5 GALATIANS 5 - THE NATURE OF TRUE FREEDOM

MODERN SLAVERY FACT FILE

The five sectors accounting for the majority of total adult forced labour are

SERVICES, MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION, AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING FISHING), AND DOMESTIC WORK.

Women in forced labour are much more likely than their male counterparts to be in domestic work, while men in forced labour are much more likely to be in the construction sector.

Women are more likely to be coerced through wage non-payment and abuse of vulnerability, and men through

THREATS OF VIOLENCE AND FINANCIAL PENALTIES.

Women are also more likely than men to be subjected to physical and sexual violence

AND THREATS AGAINST FAMILY MEMBERS.

THE NATURE OF TRUE FREEDOM

Freedom is one of the great watchwords of our time. But it covers a confusing complexity of possibilities – from each person wanting the space and opportunity to live in a certain and personal way, to the lack of constraints upon business practice, and the development of particular projects and group interests.

These worldly or fleshly focuses stand in deep tension with the gospel call to love God and love our neighbours as ourselves. The key question for religious, political, economic or social freedom is whose freedom should be given priority, and why? The victims of modern slavery and human trafficking are barely recognised as having any priority at all. They are crowded out by all the other scrambles for freedom and therefore left trapped and oppressed.

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READ HASSAN'S STORY

I fled Damascus for Lebanon when all that was left of my house was rubble. I knew the discrimination and difficulty I would face but it was nothing compared with the danger of staying where I was.

In Lebanon, I cobbled together an existence, underpaid and exploited, with nothing but a shack to call home. Many times, smugglers offered me a route out. I wanted no part in their criminal activity, no part in a journey that would place me in even greater danger. Instead, I prayed daily that God would give me another way out.

Half a decade after fleeing Damascus, I was offered the chance of safe passage to Italy through the humanitarian corridors programme. I arrived on a flight in the knowledge that I was entering the country with a visa and the certainty of concrete support in the months to come.

The church is called to love. One way that we are called to manifest our love by welcoming the stranger – without a preliminary discussion about who that stranger is or the circumstances which led them to arrive in our community. Strangers – like me – can be complicated people. We may bring with us the kind of baggage which cannot be easily unpacked and stored away.

Italian humanitarian corridors are an example of love in action. They call on faith communities to give funds, time, energy and commitment to people whom they do not know and, through that care, to heal and empower the bruised folk who arrive and who simply seek, one day, to be independent again.

HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS

The Federation of Protestant churches in Italy (FCEI), together with the Waldensian Board and the Community of Sant'Egidio, together pioneered and promoted Italian Humanitarian Corridors, the first ones implemented in Europe. Humanitarian Corridors are the result of an ecumenical collaboration between Protestants and Catholics who have chosen to join forces in a high-profile humanitarian project aimed at vulnerable refugees.

The first Memorandum of Understanding for Humanitarian Corridors was signed on December 15, 2015, by the sponsoring bodies and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior to allow, within a two year period, one thousand Syrian refugees who fled to Lebanon to reach Italy legally and safely on regular scheduled flights. The Lebanon Protocol was then renewed for another thousand people in 2017 and another thousand in 2021. The humanitarian corridors programme was a regional winner for Europe in the 2019 edition of UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award.

WEEK 5 GALATIANS 5 - THE NATURE OF TRUE FREEDOM

REFLECTION

Read Galatians 5

> Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

These are some of the most famous verses in the Bible. We are given a vision of why Christ died: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (v1). We read of God's hope for Christians: "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (v6) and His purpose for our lives: "do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (13-14).

This is what true freedom looks like – living by the Spirit and not gratifying the desires of the sinful nature. It is also about increasingly producing the fruit of the Spirit – "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (v22-23).

These are the characteristics we will need as we walk alongside victims of modern slavery. This is the nature of the care the Christian community is to offer. This is God's call on our lives.

We must also repent of when we have not been the loving and inclusive family that God calls us to.

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WEEK 5 GALATIANS 5 - THE NATURE OF TRUE FREEDOM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How can you use your freedom to serve others in love?
- Who are your neighbours?
- Look at the fruit of the Spirit – which of these characteristics do you long to grow in as you reach out to others?

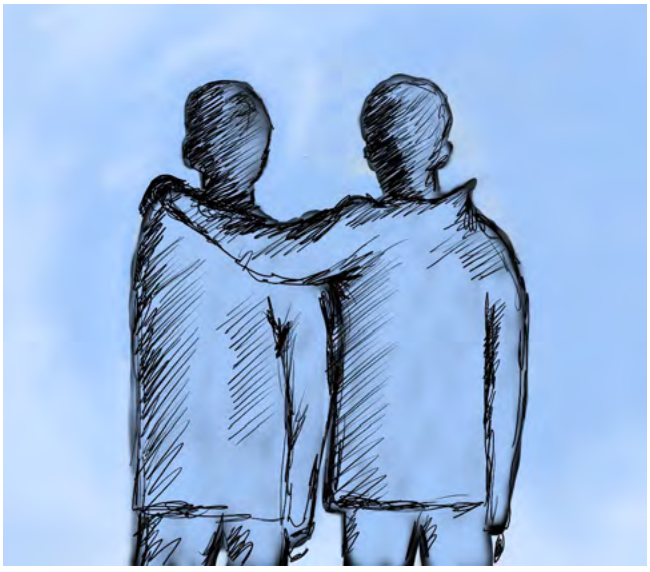
PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you came not to be served, but to serve. We pray that we may use our freedom to learn how to go the extra mile, to offer care for all those trapped in human trafficking. May our worship equip us to be disciples inspired to take the good news of your power and your presence to those denied true freedom, so that they may taste your healing touch, and be blessed with the fruits of the Spirit.

Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

What do you see in these images?
What does good victim care look like?
What can individuals and churches contribute to the recovery process?



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STORIES OF HOPE – PASSING ON NEW SKILLS TO VULNERABLE WOMEN

A team from The Clewer Initiative in the UK visited Tanzania in 2023 to see what anti-slavery work was taking place at the grassroots.

In the Diocese of Western Tanganyika (DWT), there is an issue with women and girls being trafficked to the city and trapped in sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. The women are not paid properly for their work and are often raped and abused, unable to contact family and friends or leave the situation. The Mothers' Union in the area has been very concerned about the issue so has set up a sewing project based at the Cathedral in Kasulu.

The project provides sewing classes for vulnerable women (those without education, single parents, orphans, living in poverty) and as part of the course the women are provided with a sewing machine to keep. This enables the women to be economically independent and reduces their vulnerability to exploitation.

ACTION POINT – WRITE A PRAYER

Write a prayer that would help members of your community seek God's guidance in sharing His love with those who are in particular need because of this kind of oppression.

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WEEK 6 GALATIANS 6 - THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

MODERN SLAVERY FACT FILE

MIGRANT WORKERS ARE THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE IN FORCED LABOUR THAN NON-MIGRANT WORKERS.

THE 10 COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST PREVALENCE OF MODERN SLAVERY ARE:

North Korea; Eritrea; Mauritania; Saudi Arabia; Türkiye; Tajikistan; United Arab Emirates; Russia; Afghanistan; Kuwait.

VICTIMS USUALLY HAVE A 'VULNERABILITY' WHICH MAKES THEM SUSCEPTIBLE TO EXPLOITERS SUCH AS

homelessness; immigration status and/or language difficulties; drug or alcohol dependency; a difficult family background; mental health problems; childhood/under 18s; geographic instability.

THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

With our current concern about identity and the ability to pursue particular callings or vocations, it is important to reflect on the fact that the Christian disciple is essentially a "follower." The word disciple mean a pupil or a learner.

This Lent course began by inviting us to reflect upon the voices we hear calling us, and how to discern the proper invitations and possibilities. Today much "learning" is offered through the bombardment of the media and a shrill self-righteousness that leaves so many of our sisters and brothers hidden in the shadows of suffering and oppression.

As we conclude, we are invited to reflect carefully upon how we will continue to learn about ourselves, the needs of others, and the way of our witness to bring good news to those in such desperate need.

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WEEK 6 GALATIANS 6 - THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

READ YAA'S STORY

I was born at Bortianor, a fishing community on the outskirts of Accra Ghana. I was the third of seven siblings but also the first girl. My father was a fisherman and mother a fishmonger and we were quite poor so even though I was enrolled in the local primary school, I wasn't regular.

At the age of 11 years, a man I had known as a relative told my mother that he was willing to support my mother in caring for us. After some negotiations with him, myself and two of my brothers were given to him. My father didn't really care so he just gave his consent.

On the evening of our festival celebration in August 2009, "Uncle Seth" left the village with 12 of us – four girls and eight boys.

We travelled through the night till we got to Akosombo near a large river where we were taken to a big house with several people we didn't know and served with good food and drinks we hadn't ever tasted before. It felt really good.

I, with two other boys, were given to a man who later became known as my Master. I was taken to an Island community known as "Peterese" and there my woes began.

I woke up as early as 3.30am when they were leaving to the lake and was made to do all the house chores for both my master and the wife. The wife and the three children then left me in the house to cook lunch and supper. My master had sex with me morning, afternoon and evening before his wife came home.

During this period I had nine abortions through the use of herbs given by my master. In 2016, I felt so unwell but wasn't given medical attention until a rescue team from the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) came to the community. We were rescued and brought back home. I was immediately taken to the hospital where they suspected cervical cancer – a surgery was done immediately to remove my uterus. I am doing well since I was put in school and hope to continue until I become a nurse. I thank the CCG for the support and care I received and I continue to pray for all victims.

WEEK 6 GALATIANS 6 - THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

REFLECTION

Read Galatians 6

> Let us not become weary in doing good.

This chapter beautifully describes the collective and individual responsibility we have. There is the encouragement to restore a brother who is caught in sin (v1) and carry one another's burdens (v2) as well as watching yourself carefully and carrying your own load (v5).

These verses are full of pastoral wisdom as we commit to living by the Spirit and loving others. We need to be reminded of the reality of judgment: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (v7-8) and the call not to give up: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (v9)"

Paul encourages the Galatian church: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

There are no quick fixes when it comes to eradicating modern slavery and exploitation and caring for victims. We need to be prepared for the long haul. What will keep us in step with the Spirit? A clear vision of God and the perspective of eternity.

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WEEK 6 GALATIANS 6 - THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What opportunities do you have to do good, especially towards the most vulnerable and oppressed?
- How can you be realistic about the nature of discipleship?
- How can modern slavery action become part of your life and witness for the long-term?

PRAYER

God of all graciousness, help us listen carefully to your call, so that the blessings we receive might become the means of the most vulnerable and oppressed of your children sharing this goodness, as a means of healing and restoration. Inspire our commitment, our particular contributions, and the work of our churches and partners , that your will may be done, and your daughters and sons be better united in our common call to follow the way of love ever shown in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

What do you see in these images? Paul calls the local church to do good.
What can your church contribute to caring for victims and trying to expose and prevent modern slavery?
What might caring for victims of modern slavery look like for you in the place that God has put you?

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WEEK 6 GALATIANS 6 - THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

STORIES OF HOPE – PIONEERING WORK IN JAMAICA

Margaret Fowler was just an ordinary woman when she became a disciple of Jesus Christ. A minister for the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands in her adopted home Jamaica, she received God's extraordinary call to minister to women trafficked or consenting to work in the informal, underground sex industry. Part of her intervention involved having a drink at bars where she would chat with the girls during their break. Because she was a white Scotswoman, some people considered her 'odd'. Little did they know that her 'research' would lead to the establishment of the Theodora Foundation, a centre that "served many persons coerced into sex work or subject to sexual exploitation."

Margaret Fowler is credited with establishing a seven-step process by which individual churches may get involved and break the silence on human trafficking. At the time of her death in 2020, she was actively engaged in the drafting of a Victims' Protection Protocol. Margaret is an amazing example of someone carrying the burdens of others appropriately and not becoming weary in doing good. Importantly, she did not do this work alone. Rather, she invited the local and global Church to get involved in her anti-trafficking work.

ACTION POINT

Inspired by Margaret Fowler's teaching, we invite you to consider how you can:

- PRAY: make prayer central to your witness and commitment in the fight against modern slavery
- LEARN: find ways to be continually challenged and inspired by Scripture and those who God is raising up to work in this area
- ACT: make a list of the things you are going to do in the next six months to ensure this journey continues and you play your part, with others, in bringing True Freedom to many of God's children who are crying out for help and release.

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CONCLUSION BY CAROLINE VIRGO, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

The True Freedom course has enabled us to consider many different aspects of modern slavery. We have looked at:

- how criminals entice vulnerable people and make false promises and how this contrasts with the wonderful call of the gospel.
- how people are commodified and not viewed as precious children of God.
- the limitations of the law and the role of the global church in speaking up against injustice and lobbying for change.
- the value of families and the tragedy of broken and fragmented neighbourhoods.
- our shared responsibility to care for the vulnerable and walk closely with the broken-hearted.
- the importance of good safeguarding and churches playing a preventative role in protecting people from exploitation.
- the life of a disciple and the need to persevere for the long haul as we walk in the Spirit and enjoy our freedom as children of God.

Having covered so many areas, it could be easy to walk away, overwhelmed by our thoughts and fail to land on specific action points. To avoid this outcome, we challenge you to take a moment now, at the end of the course, to reflect on your key learnings and action points.

At The Clewer Initiative, we have developed a suite of practical tools and resources to help churches, communities, partners and the public take action against modern slavery. We have posters, training courses, Bible studies and seminars which have all been designed to equip and inform. Why not visit our website to see if you could use any of these resources?

If you have been stirred by the material in True Freedom and are looking for further support or have a question about next steps, please get in touch with us by emailing clewerinitiative@churchofengland.org. We will then connect you with someone in your country who is passionate about fighting modern slavery and exploitation and support you as you explore the best way forward. We can help groups with the contextualisation of material so please get in touch if you think there is appetite for doing something locally.

We long for this to be the start of a significant journey which sees the global church wake up to the exploitation and oppression that is taking place in our communities and take action.

In the words of the Apostle Paul:

> "I pray that we would "not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." I pray that "as we have opportunity, ... we will do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."
>
> Amen."

THANKS

We would like to thank everyone who has helped bring our True Freedom project to life, particularly the members of the WCC who took part in the online consultation, Bill Crooks who created the powerful illustrations and the team at The Clewer Initiative and WCC.

APPENDIX 1 - SIGNS OF MODERN SLAVERY

MODERN SLAVERY

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

APPEARANCE

- Show signs of physical or psychological abuse and untreated injuries.
- Look malnourished, unkempt, withdrawn and neglected.
- Seem under the control or influence of others.
- Wear the same clothes every day.
- Wear no safety equipment even if their work requires it.

SEEKING HELP

- Reluctant to seek help and avoid eye contact.
- Appear frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers.
- Fear of police, don't know who to trust or where to get help.
- Afraid of deportation, and of the risk of violence to themselves or their family.

ACCOMMODATION

- Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation.
- Living and working at the same address.
- Appear unfamiliar with their neighbourhood or where they work.

TRAVEL

- Rarely allowed to travel on their own.
- Collected and dropped off on a regular basis early in the morning or late at night.
- In a crowded minibus with other workers.
- Have no control of their identification documents such as their passport.

WHO TO CONTACT:

If someone is in immediate danger then call the police on: **999**

Report non-emergency suspicious activity to your local police on: **101**

Ask for advice by calling:

The Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline: **08000 121 700**

The Salvation Army: **0300 303 8151**

NSPCC Helpline: **08008 800 5000**

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APPENDIX 2 - ADDITIONAL STORIES OF HOPE

STORIES OF HOPE – PROVIDING REFUGE TO DOMESTIC HELPERS IN HONG KONG

In Hong Kong, 400,000 domestic helpers are employed, mainly women from the Philippines and Indonesia. By law, a domestic helper is obliged to live in her employer's house, which can contribute to her dependence and vulnerability. If a work related conflict arises or if she suffers ill-treatment by her employer, she has nowhere to go because the law does not allow her to go and live on her own, not even in order to wait for the outcome of a lawsuit against her former employer.

Bethune House, a Christian initiative since 1986, offers a safe house or shelter to 30 women, for a short or longer stay of up to two years. As well as offering a safe place, it provides help in the juridical process and empowers the women by teaching them about their legal rights. It aims to help the women heal from the sometimes traumatic experiences they have been through with their former employer such as abuse of power or even rape.

STORIES OF HOPE – MARIELA'S STORY OF HOPE

Mariela arrived in Hong Kong as a domestic helper in 2017. Mariela's employer trapped her in a hostile work environment, making her work from 6am until 3am the next morning.

Sleeping in the kitchen, Mariela suffered inhumane accommodation. In extreme circumstances, she was forced to sleep on the balcony in winter. She was also restricted to two meals a day. Her health deteriorated and she lost 10 pounds in weight in two and a half months.

Mariela was sent to a hospital when she accidentally banged her head due to lack of sleep and insufficient rest. Despite her injury, the employer ignored this saying, "I don't care if you die in my house." Mariela contacted the police and was eventually taken to a hospital.

To make matters worse, her bank account did not receive any salary in employment. One night upon her return home, the employer shouted, "I don't want to see your face" and refused to let her in.

After staying with a friend for a week, Mariela was advised to seek shelter at the Bethune House while awaiting the settlement of court matters. She was so grateful for her stay at Bethune House because she learned a lot about overcoming stress and depression through various training offered by the organisation. She also learnt about employment law and rights. As a result, she was able to perform calmly in court. As time went on, she opened up to other clients at the shelter and they empowered each other to fight for justice.

Mariela won the case and her former employer was charged with constructive dismissal. Nowadays, she works for another family that treats her properly and also pays for overtime work. Sometimes, she visits the organisation to help other residents realise justice.

APPENDIX 2 - ADDITIONAL STORIES OF HOPE

STORIES OF HOPE – PIONEERING SCHOOLS WORK IN THE UK

The Clewer Initiative has produced lesson plans for schools and youth leaders to raise awareness of the nature of county lines criminal exploitation. The sessions include information, activities and case studies that show the scale of this crime as well as the impact it has on children, families and communities. Pupils are encouraged to look out for each other and are signposted to people and places to go if they have concerns.

The Clewer Initiative developed the material because it knew there was huge demand for something that could be used directly with children and young people and act as a preventative tool. This is a brilliant example of the church creating a resource that can protect children from getting targeted and trapped in slavery.

STORIES OF HOPE – GETTING ALONGSIDE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

In 2011, Council for World Mission (CWM) collaborated with the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) to address issues of Trafficking in Persons across the region. Working primarily with CWM and CANACOM member churches, the ecumenical organisations raised awareness of the perils of modern-day slavery to a context that has not yet recovered from the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade.

During one of the workshops, participants were alerted to the work of the Curaçao Conference of Churches to provide accompaniment for migrant sex workers who faced work-related exploitation and trauma. The interactions with one of the coordinators, revealed that the CCC's intervention resulted in accompaniment and support of sex workers who had been trafficked (someone received their pay directly without offering them the benefit of their earnings).

Subsequently, sex workers arriving on the island were provided with information about counselling services. The authorities have also increased efforts to reduce trafficking incidents on the island. Sadly, some ministers refused to be associated with the intervention.

Often, as people of faith we predetermine stigmas, without attempting to understand the stories of those presented as sex-workers or professional beggars. The lesson of the ecumenists reminds us that our call is to those caught in modern-day slavery regardless of their presumed profession. How might we, in our 'missionary zeal' be agents of healing, transformation and liberation?

APPENDIX 3 - MODERN SLAVERY STORIES

These films were developed by The Clewer Initiative in the UK. Most of the stories have a link to the UK. However, modern slavery exists worldwide and these stories could be re-told in every community and country. They will give you a snapshot of how people get drawn into slavery.

- Mihail's story – labour exploitation from Latvia to the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Am4Vwqj2qk&t=1s
- Emma's story – county lines criminal exploitation in the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VUt8Jx-FQI&t=25s
- Rayowa's story – domestic servitude from Nigeria to the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKLhGBXubYI
- Jing's story – sexual exploitation in the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxUPN0SQz78
- Anita's story – sexual exploitation from Albania to Rome to the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOZGhDIXm7M
- Hana's story – labour exploitation from Syria to the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gL9RSgyMYvg&t=117s
- Gemma's story – county lines criminal exploitation in the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhwihDARwgc
- Rachel's story – labour exploitation in the UK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_EHjgfYhys

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TRUE FREEDOM

A NEW GLOBAL COURSE FOR LENT 2024

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The Clewer Initiative was launched in 2016 as the Church of England's response to modern slavery. The Clewer Initiative exists to mobilise the Church and communities to take action against modern slavery. It aims to share learning, signpost best practice and contribute to policymaking and more effective legislation.

The Clewer Initiative works in varying ways with the Church of England's 42 dioceses as well as with other denominations, faith groups and community organisations. It shares learning and knowledge through its network and helps support community-based projects.

Opinions expressed in WCC Publications are those of the authors.

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