



Suggestions for Action on Modern-Day Slavery

• **Pray.** Those who are trapped in slavery around the world, and perhaps even in your own community, need our prayers. Pray also that policymakers act responsibly on this issue. Pray that the hearts and minds of those who exploit and abuse others will be changed.

• **Educate yourself, your family, and your congregation.** Learn about modern-day slavery and human trafficking. Use the piece of this Study and Action Guide titled “Resources on Modern-Day Slavery.” Share your knowledge with others in your community.

• **Hold a worship service focused on slavery.** Schedule a worship service in your congregation or community highlighting the problem of modern-day slavery. Use the piece of this Study and Action Guide titled “Resources for a Worship Focus on Slavery.”

• **Become a passionate advocate.** Find ways to speak on behalf of the enslaved in your local community, your nation, and your world. Identify the political and moral leaders of each arena who can effect change, and challenge them to speak and act boldly. Press political candidates and community leaders on all levels to address this issue and hold them accountable.

For tips or assistance in doing advocacy, and for latest news on legislation around modern-day slavery, contact the Church of the Brethren at 800-323-8039.

• **Hold a small group study on modern-day slavery.** Use this Study and Action Guide for a four- or six-week small group study of modern-day slavery. A multi-week class might be planned as follows:

Week 1: What is modern-day slavery? This topic may be divided into two or more sessions, using the piece titled “Modern-Day Slavery” as an introduction, showing some of the films listed in the piece titled “Resources on Modern-Day Slavery,” and assigning or summarizing chapters from books such as Kevin Bales’ *Ending Slavery* and David Batstone’s *Not for Sale*.

Week 2: Biblical teachings on slavery. This topic may be divided into two or more sessions using the sections outlined in the piece titled “Biblical Teachings on Slavery.”

Week 3: Church of the Brethren history and current action on slavery. Use the piece “Church of the Brethren

Statements on Slavery.”

Week 4: Use the piece “Suggestions for Action on Modern-Day Slavery” to develop your own action plan.

• **Observe the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness.**

January 11 has been established by the US Congress as the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness. Christians are called to observe the day by the National Council of Churches’ Justice for Women Working Group.

• **Be an attentive consumer.**

Don’t make impulse buys, and think ahead about the likelihood that the product you purchase has been related to slave labor or unfair labor practices. A buy that seems “too good to be true” may be that cheap because it has been produced with slave labor.

A recent list of “suspect” products (from *Ending Slavery* by Kevin Bales of the not-for-profit group Free the Slaves) cautions to take care in purchasing luxury goods such as gold, diamonds and other gem stones, jewelry, and rugs and carpets. Also on the suspect list are clothing and shoes, food items such as beef, rice, tomatoes, lettuce, apples and other fruit, shrimp and other fish products, sporting goods, fireworks, rope, cotton, timber, bricks, steel, and tin.

Before you shop, if possible check the integrity of products and the companies that make them.

The Church of the Brethren Study and Action Guide on Modern-Day Slavery

is posted at www.brethren.org/slavery and includes pieces on:

- Modern-Day Slavery
- Biblical Teachings on Slavery
- Church of the Brethren Statements on Slavery
- Resources for a Worship Focus on Slavery
- Suggestions for Action on Modern-Day Slavery
- Resources on Modern-Day Slavery
- Bulletin Insert

One method is to review ethics policies on the manufacturer's corporate website, and to check hiring and labor practices of the store where you plan to buy the product.

Sample story: *Beth's son needed new shoes, but she worried about treatment of the workers who made them. She didn't want her money to support unfair wages, slave labor, or child labor. Before going shopping, she looked at ads for shoes. She identified three that might suit her son, then searched those companies' corporate websites for a code of ethics or statement of corporate responsibility on employment. Two had ethics statements, but the third made no mention of labor ethics. Beth decided to buy shoes from one of the two companies with ethics statements. She paid more for the shoes but came home happy with her purchase.*

Another way to check out a product is to look up the corporate history of its manufacturer, with the help of nonprofit organizations that provide socially responsible investment (SRI) guidelines such as Brethren Benefit Trust (www.brethrenbenefittrust.org) or the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (www.iccr.org).

Sample story: *John was on the Stewards Commission at church. When the church needed a new stove, he was asked to research the purchase. He was concerned about quality and price, but also about using money in a Christ-like fashion. He assessed quality and prices using Consumer Reports, but also researched the SRI standing of manufacturers. He consulted Breth-*

ren Benefit Trust's list of the top 25 military contractors, and looked up manufacturers on the website of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility. He ruled out one as a top military contractor and another that was the subject of stockholder actions on employment practices. When he brought his recommendation to the Stewards, the group also held a discussion of the church's consumer practices.

• **Research services that you purchase.** Slavery may be involved in services we receive. In this country, slavery may be found in groups providing cleaning, gardening, lawn care, travel services, and tourism. When traveling or organizing a conference, ECPAT-USA suggests using a company that has demonstrated commitment to protecting children from sexual exploitation by tourists. Some hotel chains and companies have signed a Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children. Go to www.thecode.org for a list of companies, arranged by country, that have agreed to a code to protect children from sexual exploitation.

• **Purchase certified fair-trade goods.** Fair-trade foods such as coffee, tea, and chocolate are available from a variety of organizations such as A Greater Gift/SERRV. These products are monitored to meet fair-trade standards that address compensation for workers and working conditions. Greater Gift also sells hand-crafted gift items that provide fair wages to artisans.

Organic products also may be more reliably slave-free, according to some organizations.

• **Look for signs of slavery in your community.** Slavery can exist anywhere, your community is not immune. Domestic servants may be brought into the country with promises of education or advancement but find themselves enslaved in a local household; troubled youth who end up on the street may become prostitutes with little hope of release; illegal immigrants hoping to improve their lives may instead work as slave labor at farms or factories.

Following are resources for studying the incidence of slavery in a community:

- The US Department of State offers information on how to recognize trafficking victims at www.state.gov/g/tip/c16508.htm.
- *Slavery Still Exists: And It Could Be in Your Backyard* from Free the Slaves is a guide for beginning a study of human trafficking. Go to www.freetheslaves.net for a copy.
- A 30-minute documentary from Not For Sale tells how University of San Francisco students carried out a successful effort against traffickers. View it at www.notforsalecampaign.org.

Share findings with your pastor and others leaders in your church. This may serve as a call to action and discipleship.