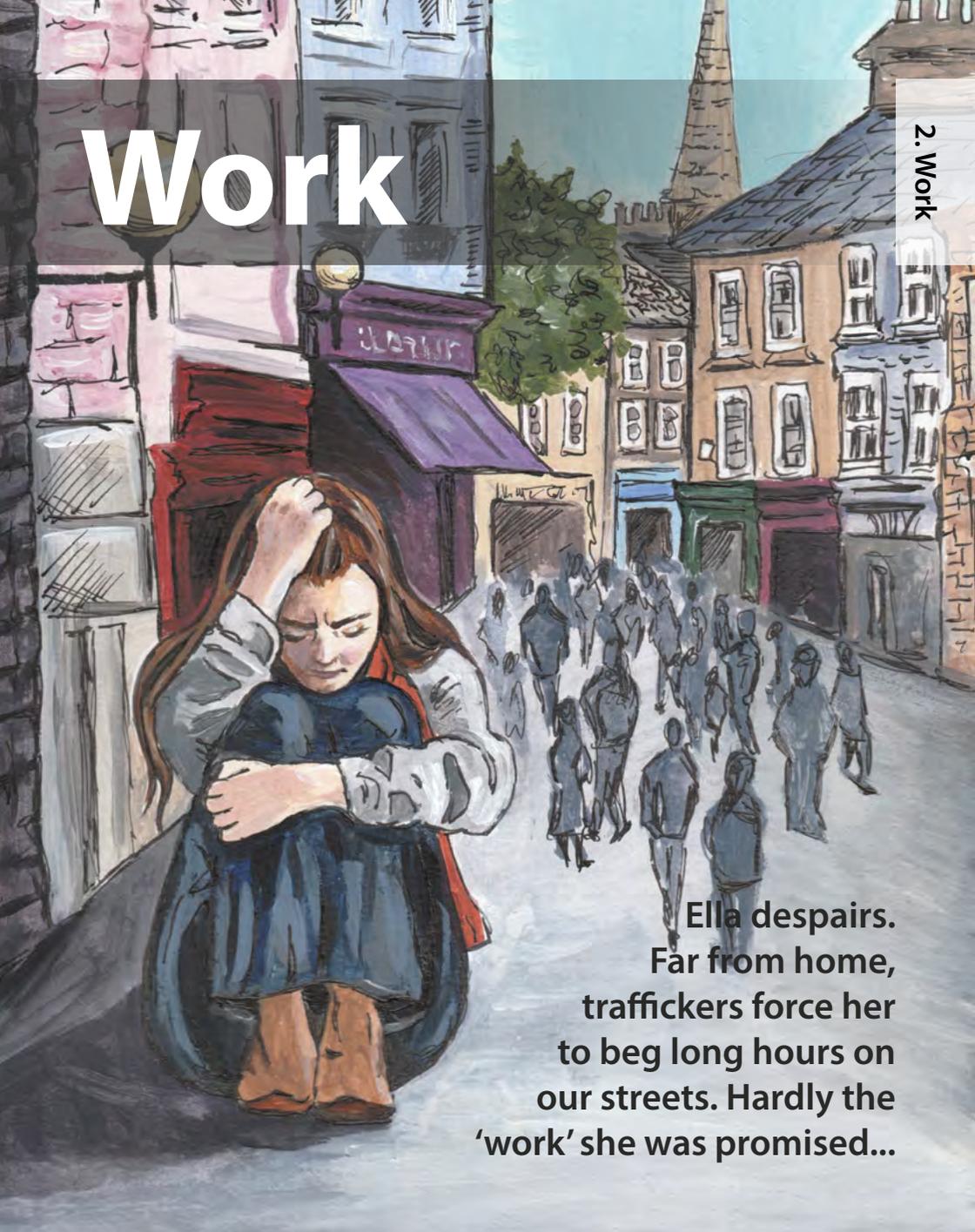


Work



Ella despairs.
Far from home,
traffickers force her
to beg long hours on
our streets. Hardly the
'work' she was promised...

Work is...

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" is the unequivocal first article of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Of the 29 articles which follow, three are explicitly related to work: Article 4 prohibits slavery, servitude and the slave trade and Article 23 stipulates that "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment and to equal pay for equal work". Article 24 flips the coin: "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay".



Several millennia earlier, the Hebrew people (recalling their own experience of servitude in Egypt) had written the same necessity to rest into *their* laws: "*Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.*" Exodus 20.9-10

*I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.*

The verse above is from one of Wendell Berry's 'Sabbath Poems'.

What does it make you feel? Does it encourage you to take rest more seriously perhaps? Does it make you a bit wistful, even envious, of Berry's stillness among the trees and distance from his tasks?

And what about work itself? Reflect on the employment you have had in your life. In addition to money in your pocket, list all that it has brought you...

At its best, work can be an offering to God and from The Rule of Benedict we get the phrase *laborare est orare* (to work is to pray). But when fear and cruelty abound and labour is not balanced by rest, work is far from being a holy thing.

Cover image by Eloise Brown from *A Taste of Freedom* (see p13). Background image: bejo/Shutterstock.com

Modern Slavery?

Think slavery is a thing of the past? Think again! William Wilberforce thought future generations of Britons would see slavery as "a disgrace and dishonour to this country", yet, more than 200 years since its abolition, the shaming trade and exploitation of human beings still thrives. There are more slaves today than at any other point in history; an estimated 40 million men, women and children caught up around the world in a £115 billion industry.

Contemporary 'taskmasters' abuse all three of those UDHR articles (top left), tossing them aside with no regard at all for the dignity or rights of those whom they exploit.

Tricked into 'employment', today's slaves are stripped of freedom and choice, relentlessly overworked and paid a pittance, if at all. They are often housed in squalid and overcrowded conditions, live in fear and have no rest.

How can this be? How do we not see this injustice, especially when its scale is so vast?



The invisibility of modern slavery is underlined in this two minute video: [epigram.org.uk/2018/10/06/unchosen-retrospective/](https://www.epigram.org.uk/2018/10/06/unchosen-retrospective/)

What is it?

IT'S THE ILLEGAL TRADE OF HUMAN BEINGS. It's recruitment, control, and use of people for their bodies and for their labour.

Through force, fraud, and coercion, people everywhere are being bought and sold against their will - right now in the 21st century.

Release to the captives! Freedom for the oppressed!

St Luke (4.16-21) describes Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, reading some inspiring words from Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.*

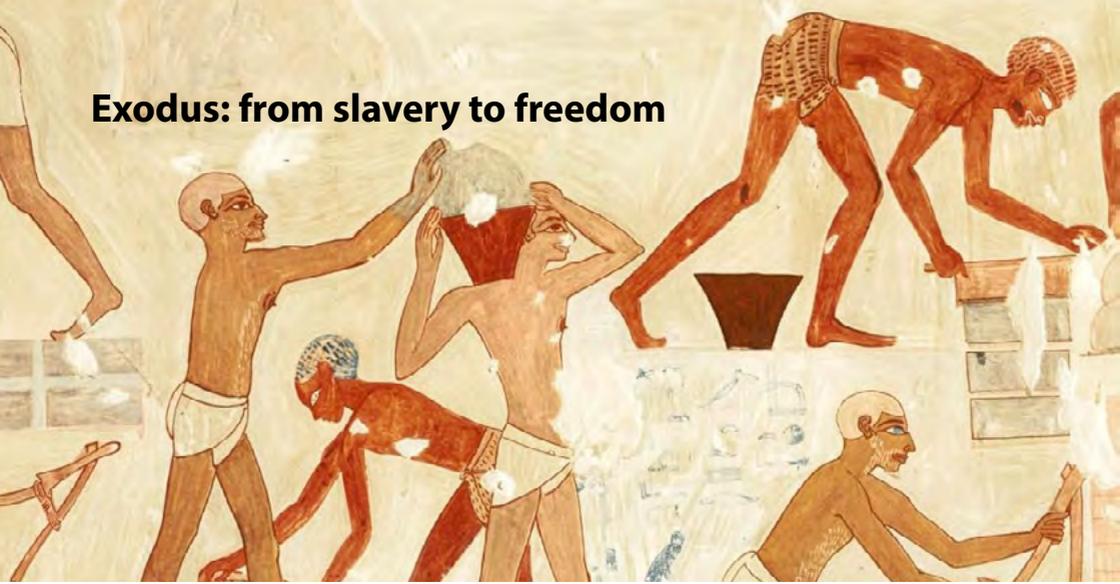
*He has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's
favour.*

Then he amazed everyone by saying that Isaiah's words were fulfilled in *him*...



What do you think Jesus meant? And now that "Christ has no body on earth but ours" (Teresa of Avila), what do his words claiming fulfilment mean for those who call themselves Christians?

Exodus: from slavery to freedom



The struggle out of slavery and towards freedom is the seminal event of the Hebrew Bible, one that all Jews are commanded to pass on from generation to generation.

The story is well-known. The Hebrews were held in oppressive conditions in Egypt, forced labour for the Pharaoh's extensive building programme. They were not free to leave and were treated with cruelty by their Egyptian taskmasters. They 'groaned under their slavery and cried out' and 'God heard their groaning.' (Exodus 2.23-4). Despite serious misgivings, Moses responded to God's call to demand the release of his people. Again and again, he appealed to the Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"

Slavery in the construction industry still casts a long

God of Justice, you weep over our destruction and call your people from slavery to freedom: deliver us from the bonds of inertia that we may open our eyes to oppression and work with one another to build a world where all are valued, all are free.

USPG

shadow, especially over mega sporting events. Change.org produced the image below to accompany a petition.



Let my people go

When Israel was in Egypt's land

Let my people go

Oppressed so hard they could not stand

Let my people go

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land

Tell old Pharaoh,

Let my people go

So Moses went to Egypt's land

Let my people go

To make old Pharaoh understand

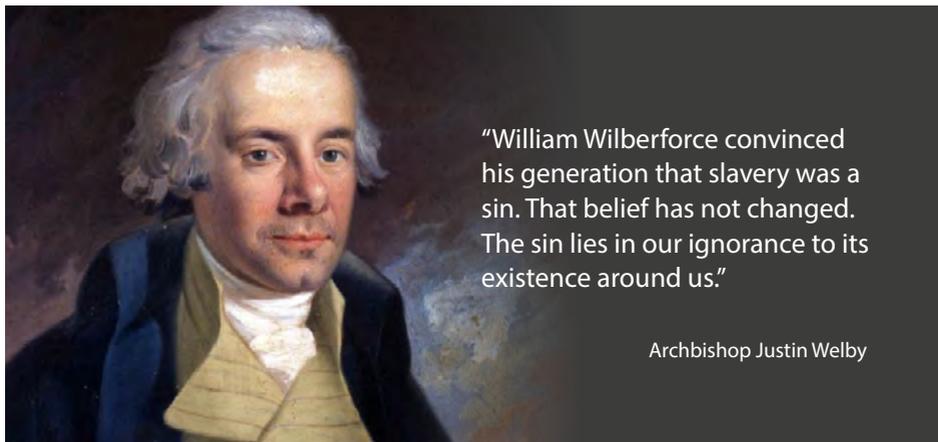
Let my people go



During their own experience of enslavement, African Americans looked to their Judaeo-Christian heritage for parallels. They found their own story in the story of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt and sang 'spirituals' as a way to express their faith, their sorrows and their longings for freedom. More particularly, Harriet Tubman (above right), a former slave and 'conductor' on the Underground Railroad, used spirituals such as the one above to signal to slaves that she was in the area, and would help any who wanted to escape. Many recordings are available but Paul Robeson's is especially famous. Listen at <https://youtu.be/gtLcELU1brA>

In his Harriet Tubman series (1940), the artist Jacob Lawrence presented 31 poignant portrayals of Tubman's life and struggle against slavery. The one below is entitled *Harriet Tubman dreamt of freedom*.





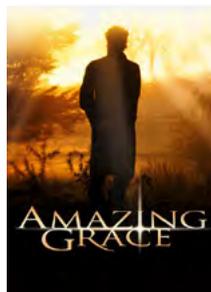
There is no longer slave or free... for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3.28)

After Wilberforce's first bill against slavery was defeated in 1789 and undaunted by public ridicule, he raised the issue in Parliament for a further eighteen years, his campaigning visibly rooted in his Christian faith. For much of this time, he was a deeply unpopular man. Lord Nelson, for instance, saw him as a traitor to the national interest and attacked 'the damnable doctrine of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies'. Those familiar with the Bible cited St Paul's injunction that slaves be obedient to their masters but conveniently forgot his radical claim that slaves and free are 'one in Christ Jesus'.

But there was encouragement too. Shortly before John Wesley died, he said to Wilberforce: 'Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall banish away before it'. And, at the point of victory in the campaign, MPs were fighting to pay tribute to him, clapping and cheering him in displays previously unseen in Parliament.

Amazing Grace

Michael Apted's 2006 film "Amazing Grace" highlights Wilberforce's relationship with John Newton (slave-trader turned abolitionist and writer of the eponymous hymn) in the struggle against the slave trade. The DVD brings their courageous and compassionate campaign powerfully to life. Watch it and be inspired!





My eyes say

Although I cannot speak,
my eyes say everything.
My eyes see everything
and my eyes say what they see, what they have seen.
My eyes say that I long for the days I spent with my family.
My eyes say that I was promised a better life and taken away.
My eyes say that I am forced to work until I pass out.
My eyes say that I have not eaten a proper meal in years.
My eyes say that I am fearful of speaking out.
My eyes say 'Help!' because my mouth cannot.
My eyes say that I am working to death in this bitter field.
My eyes say that I want to go home.
My eyes say everything.
Because I cannot.

Anonymous



Spot the signs

Here are two short videos. The first <https://youtu.be/d9tN6FM28ws> produced by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, is about spotting the signs of slavery at work. The second <https://youtu.be/BNgoxw2694A> produced by the Salvation Army, highlights the signs of domestic servitude. Overleaf: the Clewer Initiative's guide to spotting the signs of slavery in rural areas.

MODERN SLAVERY IN RURAL AREAS

If you think you have spotted the signs of modern slavery call the concerns call the **Gangmasters' and Labour Abuse Authority**



GROUPS OF TENTS

Victims of modern slavery may be housed in tents in fields or in makeshift shelters at all times of the year. Homeless or vulnerably housed people are at high risk of modern slavery.



CARAVANS ON SITES

Victims of modern slavery may be housed in caravans close to their place of work or on wastelands. The caravans are likely to host several people, be dirty, and in disrepair.



DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

Victims of domestic servitude will work cleaning the home and looking after children. They will not be able to leave the house unsupervised and their ID will be confiscated by their exploiter.



POP-UP BROTHELS

Temporary brothels may take over holiday cottages in rural areas, particularly during off-season. Look for lots of men coming in and out of the property at odd hours.

S: A GUIDE TO SPOTTING THE SIGNS

modern slavery helpline on 08000 121 700, or for labour exploitation on 0800 432 0804. In an emergency situation always call 999.



GROUPS OF PEOPLE WAITING

Victims may be picked up and dropped off at their workplace by their trafficker. They will wait by the side of the road and often be picked up by a minibus or in a van.



HAND CAR WASHES

Hand car washes are a risk area for modern slavery. Look for cash-only payments, an overbearing manager and fearful workers wearing no protective clothing.



LABOUR EXPLOITATION

Labour exploitation has been found in farms producing meat, eggs, flowers, and vegetables. Migrant labourers who do not speak English are at risk of being exploited.



COUNTY LINES

Young people from cities are groomed to sell drugs in county towns. Look for teenagers travelling alone by train during school hours.



Unseen and unnoticed for 22 years...

In 2018, the first multi-agency partnership (see symbols left) was formed to fight slavery in our region. Norfolk Constabulary and other public authorities worked closely alongside many Christian groups, aware that churches are not only deeply embedded in their communities but also seen as places of sanctuary.

In 2020, the Norfolk Anti-Slavery Network was formed to continue this work: find out more at www.norfolkantislavery.org

To illustrate the need for local agencies committed to tackling slavery, Dale's story (not his real name) is often told. By the time he was 17, Dale had run away from an abusive stepfather, been arrested many times for minor crimes, and used drugs and alcohol to escape from it all, eventually becoming homeless and sleeping rough. One glorious day, he thought rescue had come when he was invited to go home with some people he'd met on the street. "Come and live with us," they said, "and we will take care of you". It turned out, however, that the people he'd encountered were a criminal gang living within a local group of Travellers. Dale had been conned. The 'care' he'd been promised turned out to be the worst abuse ever. Housed in a squalid caravan and forced to work long hours doing whatever the gang required, he was effectively a domestic slave. Each time he ran away, he was pursued, found, and, after a punishment beating, kept in worsening conditions. Eventually, 22 whole years later, the Salvation Army rescued Dale and put him in touch with all the support he needed to put his life back together.

*Lord of the lost and the least,
you see the unseen and notice the unnoticed,
help us also to hear the hidden voices
of those who long for release from slavery and exploitation:
inspire us to give ourselves more fully to serve those in need
and strengthen us as agents of your hope and freedom. Amen.*

Clewler Initiative (adapted)

*"Ending slavery is really about saving our own souls.
Slavery is a barometer of our own humanity."*

Professor Kevin Bales



Hidden in Plain Sight

Sara Shamma's 2019 exhibition at King's College London was starkly entitled: 'Modern Slavery'. The acclaimed Syrian artist had become aware of the display and sale of women and girls in markets in Syria and Iraq and was moved to explore the psychological impact.

Alongside academics at King's, Shamma first listened to the stories of many trafficking and slavery survivors and then distilled what she heard into her work, trying to capture the essence of their lives, past and present, the pain they had endured and their efforts to overcome it. Far more than words and statistics, her paintings convey the complexity of slavery experiences and the maelstrom of emotions they generate.

Take the eyes staring out at us from *Hidden in Plain Sight* (above). One commentator sees in them both vulnerability and defiance, fear and disdain. The girl looks over her shoulder uneasily, guiltily. Her sense of being watched is palpable. The other character is visible but hidden behind some sort of screen.

"I want my paintings to touch and move people, to change their minds and make them ask questions," said Shamma. She is enabling a new visual vocabulary for modern slavery to develop.

What do you make of this painting? How do the two figures relate to each other? And why has Shamma shown us the reflection of the young girl?



Slaves in a nail bar?



If you are a Corrie fan, you may remember a 2019 storyline involving a Romanian girl called Alina who was bullied and exploited by traffickers in a Manchester nail bar.

The extent of human trafficking in the manicure industry was then thrust into the public eye in October 2019, when the bodies of 39 Vietnamese migrants were found in a lorry in Essex. It's believed at least some of them were being smuggled into the country to work in nail bars. Cheap nail salons have proliferated in the UK in recent years, but their low prices often come at a very real human cost.

Few expect slavery to be visible on their local high street - but it is.

What are the red flags? – workers with limited English, withdrawn and reluctant to make eye contact, wary of the manager, offering services for unusually low prices yet perhaps not being allowed to handle the money themselves.

Slaves at a car wash?



Exploitation is also prevalent at car washes. People are forced to work long hours, for little or no pay, and under threat of violence. Of course many hand car washes are legitimate businesses, but some are not. Police raids in hand car washes up and down the country have unearthed victims living in horrendous conditions.

So the Clewer Initiative launched their free Safe Car Wash App in 2018. You can download it onto your smartphone here: www.theclewerinitiative.org/safe-car-wash-app When you are using a hand car wash, simply open the app and complete a short survey about the working conditions you are witnessing.

Many thousands have already done this. Nearly half of them reported that workers did not have protective clothing despite handling harmful chemicals. 80% identified a cash-only policy, 17% fearful-looking workers and 14% caravans, containers or mattresses nearby, suggesting that workers lived on site. In addition, 10% stated that children were part of the workforce.

Now that you're more aware of the signs, is there anything you have seen recently which is nagging at you as a possible instance of modern slavery?



Slavery in the supply chain



Cotton shirts? Chocolate bars? Mobile phones? Shoes? Watch this short video to discover where slavery can lurk in the supply chain: freedomunited.org/advocate/products-of-slavery

Since the Modern Slavery Act came into being in 2015, all UK businesses are required to ensure that there is no slavery in their supply chains and those with turnovers of more than £36 million must produce an annual Modern Slavery Statement (MSS) and display it online.

Have you seen the MSS of the supermarket where you normally shop? Make a point of finding it online or asking for a hard copy in store.



Do slaves work for you?

Track your own slavery footprint at www.slaveryfootprint.org/survey

Five of the world's largest technology companies have been accused of being complicit in the death of young children forced to work in the cobalt mines of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Cobalt is used in mobile phones and computers.



Launched in 2017, the Clewer Initiative mobilises churches to end modern slavery in the UK. It works across CofE dioceses and networks to develop strategies for detecting modern slavery and support victims. Find out how it is collaborating with our own diocese at www.theclewerinitiative.org/norwich

Modern slavery is just as likely in villages as in cities: the Clewer Initiative has created a toolkit to equip rural churches. Go to www.theclewerinitiative.org/rural

Eat well and fight modern slavery

"Taste of Freedom" is a community cookbook put together by a small group of cooking (and eating!) enthusiasts at St Thomas Church, Norwich. As well as sharing over 85 recipes, the book raises awareness of modern slavery and all profits support the STN Trust's work with survivors of slavery. The book can be purchased for £15 at the Mitre Café or Sanctuary Coffee Stop in Norwich, or at: stn.org.uk/cookbook



What you see depends upon where you stand...

The vast majority of people throughout history have been poor, disabled, or oppressed in some way (i.e., “on the bottom”) and would have read history in terms of a need for change, but most of history has been written and interpreted from the side of the winners. The unique exception is the revelation called the Bible, which is an alternative history from the side of the often enslaved, dominated, and oppressed people of Israel, culminating in the scapegoat figure of Jesus himself.

We see in the Gospels that it’s the lame, the poor, the blind, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the sinners, the outsiders, and the foreigners who tend to follow Jesus. It is those on the inside and the top—the Roman occupiers, the chief priests and their conspirators—who crucify him. Shouldn’t that tell us something really important about perspective? *Every viewpoint is a view from a point.* We must be able to critique our own perspective if we are to see a fuller truth.

from Richard Rohr *Yes, And... Daily Meditations* (Franciscan Media 2019)

“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

Salvation Army

“You may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you didn’t know.”

William Wilberforce

The prophetic voice of the church

“As Christians we are called to speak up and to speak out. In short, to be prophetic.” So writes the Revd Duncan Dormor, General Secretary, USPG.

To be prophetic involves challenging injustice and standing up for the oppressed. Fortunately, today’s world is graced with prophets every bit as forthright as those in the Old Testament. And, as Duncan Dormor asserts, “Such voices cannot be silenced. They call us to be like Jesus who stood on the margins, comforting the oppressed and challenging the comfortable.”

Even that great prophet Moses came to the task kicking and screaming: “O my Lord, please send someone else” (Ex 4.13) he wails, overwhelmed by fear and inadequacy and self-doubt.

What would it take for us to overcome our own such feelings and stand up to today’s ‘taskmasters’ on behalf of those they mistreat? What would it take for us to find our own prophetic voice? Read Exodus chs 3 & 4 for inspiration.



Be the change!



"There's a lot of talk about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in this chaotic, uncertain world, but we can be sure of one thing: it is by acting as a disciple of Christ that we learn what it means to be one. True Christian living is to join with Jesus in setting the prisoners free – in this case, those whose self-esteem and trust in others is beaten out of them so they can be re-shaped to service evil people.

"It is easy to be deterred by the size of the task in front of us, especially when we can only guess at its extent. Self-justified apathy asks, 'What difference can I make, when there is so much to put right?' The Bible, Church and British history say something different. In Matthew 25, Jesus basically says that when we help another human being we are helping him, personally. And the Church's story is one of social action, healing this world of the sin that disfigures it."

Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge



"There is no evil so entrenched that it cannot be eradicated. Inspired by the abolitionists of two centuries ago, let us fight against exploitation and oppression and stand up for freedom and human dignity." Kofi Annan

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead, anthropologist



"Together we can stop trafficking and slavery. Often, because we know we can't do it all, we end up being paralysed. So we do nothing. But if we understand we can't do everything but we all must do something, and we all find the one thing that we can do, then together we will make such a huge difference. We can *be the change!*" Christine Caine, Co-founder A21 Campaign

Pray for all victims of trafficking that they may find safety from exploitation and that their dignity and sense of self be restored.

Pray for those who exploit the misery of others that they may turn from selfish gain to work for the common good.

Pray for ourselves when we fail to notice the world around us, that we may grow in awareness of our neighbour and reach out to those in need.

'What then should we do?' (Luke 3.10)

Here are three suggestions: choose your depth and dive in!

Gather a group together to pray. These resources may help:

www.DofN.org/slavery-prayers

Tell others how to spot the signs and flag up the Modern

Slavery Helpline: 08000 121 700 or www.modernslaveryhelpline.org

Join (or organise yourself!) a Walk for Freedom. Find out more at:

www.a21.org/content/about/gptuog

Image: Bokica/Shutterstock.com

Useful websites:

- norfolkantislavery.org
- a21.org
- ijm.org
- gla.gov.uk
- antislavery.org
- stopthetraffik.org
- freedomfund.org
- freedomunited.org
- helenbamber.org
- togetherfree.org.uk
- antislaveryday.com
- theclewerinitiative.org
- antislaverycommissioner.co.uk
- modernslavery.co.uk
- globalslaveryindex.org
- respect.international/products-of-slavery
- salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery
- unseenuk.org/what-we-do/anti-slavery-partnership

About the series...

This is the second in a series of six booklets exploring the relationship between Christian faith and some of the most pressing issues of our time. The hope is that individuals and groups of all sorts will find them challenging and inspiring.

Written by Susanna Gunner

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 THE CHURCH
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