

Modern Slavery: Java for Justice

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Seven. It could be the year of a favorite birthday, the count of ducks in a pond, or the ounces of water in a glass. For victims of slavery, seven may be all they have. A lot can happen in seven years. For slaves, seven can represent the transition from freedom to enslavement, and from life to death. According to current statistics, the average slave survives a mere seven years (Sudhalter). Slavery does not discriminate based on age, gender, or race. It does not care who one is or what they do, only that their life, mind, and body are “consumed by someone else’s greed” (Bales).

Context

Slavery “has three elements: control through violence, economic exploitation, and the loss of free will” and can be defined as the manipulation or coercion of any person by means of an underpaid, overworked, or indebted position with no way out (“Slavery”; Bales). *Modern* slavery is simply a term used to describe slavery in today’s society. Many types of slavery exist currently: sex trafficking, forced labor, domestic servitude, or forced military drafting (Bales). The term *trafficking* is sometimes used interchangeably with *slavery*. Trafficking does not necessarily involve a long distance transport. “Victims need not cross international boundaries. They can be intentionally trafficked within their own countries, often from rural to urban areas” (Trainer). Likewise, victims of forced labor do not necessarily have to be moved from one place to another.

Slavery has always made a profit off of the oppression of others. The profit from slavery in the 1800’s was approximately 5%. Today, that return has multiplied to over 800% (Bales). The fact that slavery is so lucrative globally, explains its current popularity. The profit made from labor slaves alone is \$13 billion annually (“Photos”). This *one* industry generates nearly the

same amount as some countries' gross domestic products (GDP). In 2017, Jamaica's GDP was \$14 billion. This means that in one year, victims of forced labor slavery produced nearly as much as the entire country of Jamaica, yet they see no profit for their labor. More than twenty-four million people globally are victims of forced labor today. From these twenty-four million people, \$150 billion is illegally profited annually from the agricultural industry alone. This industry includes coffee, cacao, fruit, vegetables, wheat, and other crops (Trainer). While this issue goes far beyond merely coffee and cocoa, this paper will focus solely on the coffee and cocoa industries to demonstrate the enormity of the problem.

Coffee

Two types of coffee exist: robusta, (usually from Kenya, Ethiopia, or Latin America) and arabica (usually from Brazil, Uganda, or Vietnam). "Unfortunately, coffee is tied to a long history of colonialism and slavery, and production of the crop remains a hotbed of exploitation and environmental degradation to this day" ("Bitter Brew"). In 2016, two of the world's largest coffee and chocolate companies, Nestlé (Nescafé, Nespresso, Gerber, KitKat) and Jacobs Douwe Egberts (Gevalia, Maxwell House, Cafe Prima) make up approximately 39% of the global coffee trade. Both industry giants admitted that slave labor exists in their Brazilian supply chain. Nestlé admits purchasing coffee from two plantations with known forced labor practices and the company still cannot "fully guarantee that it has completely removed forced labour practices or human rights abuses" from their supply chain ("Bitter Brew"; "About us"). Both companies knowingly buy arabica and robusta coffee from places with known slavery ("Bitter Brew"). Unfortunately, the chocolate industry is no different.

Chocolate

Three main types of chocolate exist today: dark, milk, and white. All three, however, are made from the same kind of cacao plant, and America's appetite for it is insatiable. The cacao plant grows in tropical climates, namely the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria ("Cocoa Production"). The cacao pods are picked, roasted, bagged, and transported to distribution centers ("Cocoa Production"). Children, providing much of this manual labor, are often mistreated, underpaid, and hidden in the shadows (Beech). Companies that produce cocoa and coffee on the backs of slave labor are often deceptive when it comes to their supply chain transparency.

Coffee/Chocolate Statistics

In a 2016 study conducted by Know the Chain, (a nonprofit organization advocating for corporate transparency) KTC graded the largest food and drink companies in the world on various criteria (purchasing practices, recruitment, traceability, etc). The highest possible grade was 100% ("2016 Food"). Unfortunately, "Companies tend to score low across all themes assessed, with an average overall score of 30/100" (Grossman). Within the cocoa industry, Nestlé scored the highest, with a mere 57/100. Hershey scored a disappointing 27/100 (Grossman). When it comes to coffee, the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark(CHRB) gave Starbucks a mere 8.5/100 (using the same scale as the KTC report). KTC's latest report reveals that "most (companies) need to do far more to keep forced labor out of their supply chains" (Grossman). Because of results like this, supply chain transparency laws seek to mitigate the problem. Multiple companies, however, like those mentioned above, have failed to follow these laws and are perpetuating labor trafficking in their foreign plantations today.

Current Legal Solutions

Supply Chain Transparency

A transparency law can be one of two kinds. The first is a “self-disclosure by companies regarding their efforts to combat human trafficking in their own supply chains” (Matuszak). The other “requires companies to undergo audits and be certified” (Matuszak). In agriculture, these transparency laws include disclosure about a company’s profits, employees, supply chains, and production (Matuszak). The *boxes* needing *checked* for such laws include, but are not limited to: “verification, audits, certification, internal accountability, training” (Matuszak). Supply chain transparency laws are intended to ensure that the origins of *products and services* is genuine and that this information is readily available to consumers and other companies within a brand’s supply chain. Such laws aim to create transparency pertaining to all raw sources of the product and all labor practices necessary to create the end product. Supply chain transparency laws aim to reduce, if not end, forced labor in the supply chains of corporate giants like Nestlé and Hershey and to increase consumer awareness by requiring companies to publicly post supply chain information on their websites. For companies such as Nestlé and Jacob Douwe Egberts, however, this is in progress but not yet completed.

While supply chain transparency is currently enacted in several states, it is not yet required at a federal level. Some federal supply chain laws, however, are currently proposed, such as H.R. 7089. This law would require companies to disclose all measures taken to fight forced labor, slavery, and human trafficking in a company’s supply chain and how they went about it (Groff). California took the first leap in 2010, proposing one of the first supply chain transparency laws in the world. In January 2012, California passed the Supply Chains Act

introduced in 2010. This law ensures that all retail sellers and manufacturers doing business in California (with worldwide gross incomes in excess of \$100 million) disclose all activity and information concerning their supply chains (California State). This information must be displayed publicly on the company's website, readily available to anyone. Washington quickly fell into step with Senate Bill 5693, focusing on transparency in the agricultural industries specifically (Groff).

While both laws are enormous step toward transparency, they simply do not go far enough. The Supply Chain Act “does not mandate that businesses implement new measures to ensure that their product supply chains are free from human trafficking and slavery” (California State). These laws do not safeguard supply chains, nor do they require companies to actively fight forced labor; they merely require the disclosure of all activity. These laws also do not include retail sellers or manufacturers making less than \$100 million a year. Many companies do not enforce supply chain transparency, nor plan to anytime soon. Francesca De La Torre, writer and author for *Ethical Consumer* recently revealed that Starbucks sold its retail coffee production to Nestlé for \$7.1 billion (De La Torre). The espresso blend is its only ethically sourced retail product. This single ethical choice is likely a result of pressure from consumers, not due to any altruistic motivation within the brand. Starbucks is also frequently boycotted by informed consumers for its opaque information detailing the origins of its coffee, food, etc. Though transparency laws are a good first step, it is up to consumers to know where to look and what to buy. This search is aided by fair trade certification.

Fair Trade Certification

Fair trade “certification bodies” began to emerge as the awareness of forced labor spread. In the United States alone, five recognized fair trade labels exist: Fair Trade International, Fair Trade U.S.A., Fair for Life, the World Fair Trade Organization, and the Fair Trade Federation (“Navigating Fair Trade”). Fair Trade USA, however, is responsible for eight-hundred plus certified cocoa or coffee companies (manufacturers and distributors). For coffee and cocoa industries specifically, the fair trade label reads, “Fair Trade Certified.” The label exists “to enable sustainable development and community empowerment by cultivating a more equitable global trade model that benefits farmers, workers, consumers, industry and the earth” (“Navigating Fair Trade”).

Fair Trade USA fights for ethical coffee and cocoa production all over the world. But just because a product is labeled *fair trade* does not always mean it is ethically produced. Starbucks, in fact, has created its own ethical supply chain certification (C.A.F.E.-Coffee and Farmer Equity) to ensure ethical farming practices. However, “the discovery of slavery-like conditions” in C.A.F.E. certified farms demonstrates inevitable flaws in the certification process (Penha). Due to the enormous size of companies like Starbucks, it may be impossible to ensure 100% compliance from every participant. “In fact, only about 5% of chocolate around the world is currently produced ethically. The other 95%, unfortunately, is contingent upon the perpetual enslavement of children” (Beech). This does not mean that all *companies* are unethical, merely that the way the product is produced is unethical. On July 30th, 2015, the Payson Center for International Development at Tulane University conducted a study showing a fifty-one percent increase in the cocoa industry’s enslavement of young children (Beech; Haglage). Even though it

may have a label on it, consumers must be diligent when buying products to ensure they are not inadvertently owning slaves.

Biblical Perspective

Is this an issue Christians should even be concerned about? Is it a slippery slope towards liberal theology under the guise of social justice? Or is it an opportunity to demonstrate Christ-like character? John Piper, founder of *desiringGod.org* and Chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, claims that many Christians today believe “Social justice is merely a buzz word among millenials that preaches a social gospel rather than a biblical gospel” (Piper). Some Christians may equate the fight against modern slavery as a liberal social justice agenda rather than a gospel issue. They fear that if the church emphasizes this cultural tragedy, the gospel will become “more social than gospel” (De Young). This, in their estimation, could cause well-meaning Christians to stray from biblical orthodoxy into liberal heresy. Their fear is not wholly irrational. Christians can become so enamored with the culture, that they inadvertently walk away from the faith, or stray into a form of liberal theology. Is the battle of against modern slavery a *true gospel* issue?

Social Justice

It depends on one’s definitions of social justice and the gospel. Social justice can be defined as, “treating people equitably, working for systems and structures that are fair, and looking out for the weak and the vulnerable” (De Young). This definition defines a justice that truly cares about taking care of the old, the young, the ill, and protecting the weak, the unpopular, the vulnerable, and the hidden (Carter); or as Lisa Kristine, journalist and author, explains, “the skeletons in the closet.” This definition is certainly something every Christian

should agree with, but are social justice issues gospel issues? Kevin De Young, senior pastor of Christ Covenant Church and council member of the Gospel Coalition, proposes that if “gospel issue” means “we are smuggling good works into the *sola fide* (faith alone) side of the equation” then social justice is certainly not a gospel issue. Likewise, if *social issue* means “as important as the proclamation of Christ crucified” it would also not be a gospel issue, as nothing should be more important than that (save the gospel story) (De Young). However, if gospel issue means “a necessary concern of those who have been saved by the gospel” or “one aspect of what it means to keep in step with the gospel” or “realities without which you may not be truly believing the gospel,” then *social justice*, especially as it pertains to forced labor, really is a gospel issue (De Young).

Biblical Mandate

We are called by Christ to love one another, and social justice, as defined above, is “part and parcel” (De Young) of loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39b, ESV). We are called as Christians to look after the poor and needy, to treat others with the same love Christ showed us. The Bible is filled with support for this notion:

- “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9, ESV).
- “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39b).
- “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and

recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

- “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9).
- “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).
- ...

Not only are we called to love our neighbor, but we ourselves were also once slaves—slaves to sin (Romans 6:17-18). In our bondage, Christ came to us and freed us from the chains that grasped us. We in turn, should long to free others of their bondage. As freed slaves, we should have a heart for those who continue in bondage — whether spiritual or physical, and in many cases, it’s both. It should be our desire to continue in the path that Jesus set out for us in his earthly ministry: to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Reaach). As Christ-followers, we should long to fulfill God’s law (Romans 13:8-10). Loving our neighbor is a fulfillment of God’s law: “Two times (vv. 8, 10) Paul says that the command to love our neighbor is the ‘fulfillment of the law’” (Piper). Love for God is really manifested in the way we treat others: “Love for God comes to visible manifestation when we love others. Or you could say, our love for God is ‘fulfilled’ when we love others” (Piper). Even if we do not choose to use the term “social justice,”:

Christians are engaged in social justice when we advocate for issues such as abortion, racial reconciliation, religious liberty, and sex trafficking. We engage in

social justice whenever we seek moral reform of our society in a way that ensures every person is treated with dignity and given their due. (Carter)

Therefore, Christians should be most concerned with following God's law and loving their neighbors. This should compel all Christians to bring about justice, social or not.

The vulnerable mentioned in the paragraph above includes those inadvertently oppressed by consumers through companies like Hershey, Nestlé, Starbucks, and Jacobs Douwe Egberts. When people buy from companies perpetuating forced labor, they are not loving their neighbor well. They are instead putting the whip in the hand of the oppressor, prolonging the suffering of others. Lisa Kristine, photographer and Free the Slaves volunteer, has spent the last twenty-eight years of her life dedicated to visiting and photographing different places all over the world infected by forced labor. She now speaks out against slavery in all industries- brick, agriculture, textile, etc:

I had certainly known it existed in the world, but not to such a degree...I felt so horrible and honestly ashamed at my own lack of knowledge of this atrocity happening in my own lifetime, and I thought, if I didn't know, how many other people don't know?

Many people are just like Lisa- ignorant of the atrocities of modern slavery.

Christians, however, are called by God to be aware of and respond to injustice. In the coffee and cocoa industries, for example, hundreds of innocent image-bearers are worked to death everyday. Remembering that the average lifespan of a victim in slavery is seven years should convict followers of Christ (Sudhalter). This reality should ignite a fire in the heart of

every believer. It should motivate consumers to uncover the slavery going on in their own backyards and in their coffee pots. It should drive Christians to action.

Practical Steps

As labor trafficking is certainly an injustice, Christians should advocate for its victims whenever possible. Many practical steps can be taken to speak out against forced labor. According to non-profit anti-slavery organization Exodus Road explains, “Justice,” in fact, “is in the hands of the ordinary.” Many think only police or trafficking organizations truly fight slavery. If slavery is to be fought, however, all must join forces to overcome it. “Human trafficking must be fought from within a culture if it’s to be effectively fought at all” (Exodus Road). This organization realizes a need for all people to enact justice. The hope is not only to free slaves, but to encourage ordinary people to do extraordinary acts. Acting justly requires no special qualifications. It needs no special badge, permit, age, name, or gender; only a desire to see justice enacted for the benefit of victims and the downfall of captors.

Raise Awareness

In the last ten years, many have begun to take action against forced labor. In agriculture, manufacturers are becoming more and more dedicated to eradicating forced labor in their supply chains. Farms are often hubs for forced labor practices. Thus employment transparency, as well as better working conditions, are well looked into. As awareness of forced labor increases, more and more people are recognizing it.

But companies and their employees are not the only people who should know and act. Nestlé reported that by 2020 they will have the *Nescafé Plan* and the *Nespresso AAA Sustainable Quality Program* running. These programs will help Nestlé “to source more and more of our

coffee sustainably” (“About Us”). By 2020 they plan to improve economies in four of the world’s largest coffee-producing countries, to ensure at least 70% of their Nescafé coffee is “responsibly sourced”, and to “monitor and improve labor rights in at least two coffee-sourcing countries” (“About us”). Because the knowledge of slavery is widening, more and more companies like Nestlé are proposing plans to aid in forced labor’s end, but even then, only 70% of their coffee will be ethically and responsibly sourced.

Jacob Douwe Egberts has also joined the fight by purchasing coffee and tea from places that are Rainforest Alliance and Fair Trade certified (“At the Source”). They also partner directly with their suppliers through the Supplier Initiative and hold meetings every two years to “identify and address priority issues in our supply chains” (“At the Source”). The progress toward freedom and ethically sourced products is growing exponentially, but forced labor should not be discussed and fought against every two years. It should be fought every second of every day. Companies such as Nestlé and Jacob Douwe Egberts can only go so far so fast. It is up to consumers to know about the products they purchase and the companies they purchase products from.

For coffee and cocoa, there are a plethora of brands drowning in a sea of forced labor, but good and ethical brands are available to consumers. Consumers must research the products they buy. The Food Empowerment Project (FEP) studies brands of chocolate from around the world to compile a list they feel comfortable recommending, as well as those they absolutely do not. They recommend over five-hundred chocolate brands that are anti-forced labor and fair trade. The list of *non-recommendable* chocolates, however, exceeds a thousand. Therefore, nearly one-third of the chocolate in the world is ethically made, yet consumers frequently choose

name-brands like Hershey, because it is usually the cheaper option. This option also enslaves the innocent. Unethical brands abound and consumers must familiarize themselves with what they are actually buying. Many ethical brands are admittedly a little more expensive, but a human life is worth a few pennies more. The image of children worked from morning until night with no pay stains consumer's hands. It should create a distaste for brands like Hershey and Nestlé and Starbucks, until they have fully enacted plans like the Nescafé and Nespresso AAA programs. This image should drive Christian consumers in particular to know the product, to know the chain, to choose ethical purchases, even if it costs a dollar or two more.

Serve

This drive to know and act should lead to even greater involvement. There are over one thousand nonprofit organizations in the world today fighting for the freedom of the enslaved (“Bitter Brew”; “F.E.P’s Chocolate list”; “How to Help”, et al). Of those organizations, eleven of them are specifically dedicated to fighting forced labor in agriculture and other industries. Many nonprofits are waiting for volunteers, waiting for people who care, waiting for the day when forced labor and human trafficking no longer exist. Christians should long for a world that is free from slavery and oppression. That is why organizations like Free the Slaves, the A21 Campaign, and Anti-Slavery International were created: to encourage ordinary people to do extraordinary acts. They offer opportunities to help assimilate freed slaves back into a normal life and find the rescued safe places to live. These organizations (and others like them) feed, clothe, comfort, and bring victims into safe homes.

If you are unable to volunteer physically, there are others ways to contribute. You can donate, offer emotional support, or pray for the freed captives. International Justice Mission

(IJM) benefits from participants in Dressember every year where in the month of December, all who participate wear either a dress or tie and post a picture on social media to spread the word and raise money to free captives. The Dressember organization supports several anti-trafficking organizations each year. Ample opportunities present themselves to ordinary people willing to offer a hand of aid. But the ultimately, perhaps the best way to help these captives is merely consuming fewer unethically sourced products.

Consume Less

As difficult as it may be for many Americans to imagine, coffee and chocolate were considered luxuries in the U.S. until recent history. Chocolate was introduced to the United States on a Spanish ship in 1641 (“History of Chocolate”). The first chocolate house was opened in Boston in 1682 (“History of Chocolate”). Chocolate, however was still extremely rare since it required specific growing conditions. It was so rare and precious, in fact, that it was actually used as a currency at one point (“History of Chocolate”). As chocolate became easier to transport, consumers in America gobbled it up. Since those days, chocolate has become an everyday staple, alongside coffee (“History of Chocolate”).

Coffee, introduced to America in the 18th century, was initially used as a stimulant to keep soldiers fighting wars. It quickly became popular and today it is estimated that the 2.25 billion cups of coffee consumed in the U.S. everyday makeup 1.3 billion pounds of coffee (Avey). One major way to take action against slavery in the coffee and cocoa industries is to consume fewer unethically sourced products, and consume more ethically sourced products. Consumers vote with their dollars, and in this way, change will inevitably begin to shake the

system perpetuating human enslavement. Less emphasis on big impersonal business practices, means less oppression, less slavery.

Support Legislation

A fourth action step toward the eradication of forced labor includes working within the system. Supporting legislation addressing the problem of slavery, encouraging representatives who support the captive's cause, and voting for those who truly care for the oppressed are practical examples. President Donald Trump has declared October 18, 2019, as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Day. This focuses on the goal of ending the tragedy of modern slavery, and all should partake. People from across the nation come together with local authorities, charities, and individuals to raise money and resources to help those in slavery ("Anti-Slavery Day"). While this is a step in the right direction, it is even more important that Christians elect representatives willing to fight injustice. Colorado representatives like Larry Crowder, Angela Williams, Jovan Melton, and Joseph Salazar support this cause ("Amendment A"). It is vital for all people to encourage and support representatives and organizations who concern themselves with the issue of slavery. Many Christians are rightly concerned about issues of life like abortion. Slavery is an issue of life and death as well. If all Christians dedicated themselves to voting for and supporting truly *pro-life* candidates, the cycle of slavery could bend; it could even break.

Conclusion

Therefore, Christians, as those appointed by God to care for the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40), should not only be aware of the injustice in today's industries, but act on that awareness. Even though transparency laws exist in some states, companies continue to bypass them and

oppress the vulnerable, especially in foreign countries like Vietnam, Ethiopia, and Brazil. Even fair trade labels, though a sign of ethical manufacturing, must be inspected before there can be any real assurance of ethical treatment in a company's supply chain and the wellbeing of its employees. These laws and labels are a good first step to breaking the cycle of mistreating millions of people around the world, but we must take it further to make a real difference. Christians are called by God to act on the weaker's behalf, to stand as guard for the oppressed and the needy, to make that difference. That is why consumers must not buy from companies who do not care for their employees, who bypass laws, and mass produce cheap products: companies like Hershey, Nestlé, Jacob Douwe Egberts, Starbucks. For the enslaved, the only luxury they have is death or liberation.

Christians should strive to create lasting peace in all of God's creation. Even slaves are a part of his kingdom and should be freed from their bondage just as Christians have been freed from their own bondages to sin. All people should be treated with respect and love. Buying from unethical companies supports the coercion and mistreatment of millions of people throughout the world. This is not creating peace of any kind. This is not loving our neighbor, or interceding for the broken and the weary. The products bought from unethical businesses oppress slaves. Therefore, consumers inadvertently oppress men, women, and children all over the world. How many slaves are you oppressing? How many graves must be dug in your name? How many lives are your coffee and chocolate worth? As God's ambassadors, the answer should be none. I implore all Christians to be the change, make the difference, stop the oppression, and others will follow.

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