

A Calendar of Caring for “Break the Chains: Slavery in the 21st Century”

Slavery exists today in every part of the world, and sometimes much closer than we could even imagine. The facts about human trafficking are startling, sobering, and painful. It would be much easier not to even know what is happening in the world today, but God is calling us to become aware and to do something.

Will you prayerfully consider using this one-year calendar to learn about the subject of human trafficking and seek God’s direction as to how you can be part of the growing community of Christians who want to see justice and mercy for those who are exploited? Begin with Month One, and progress to the next months in normal sequence. Each month will help you take a step toward understanding what is going on in the world and what God may be calling you to do. The lives of those who are in bondage cry out to all of us and we need to listen to their cries.

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison; and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” —Hebrews 13:1

MONTH ONE: Become informed.

- **Research** human trafficking on the Internet.
General information: www.humantrafficking.org
The United Nations: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html
The U.S. State Department: http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking/traffick_report.html
Interpol: www.interpol.int/Public/THB/default.asp (note menu item “Trafficking in Women”)
AB Women’s Ministries mission project: www.abwmbreakthechains.org
- **Read** Exodus 3:7-12. Meditate on what you have learned on the websites and how it is reflected in this Scripture.
- **Pray** that God will open your eyes and your ears and your heart to the cries of persons near and far who are enslaved.

MONTH TWO: Read a book.

- **Read a book** and ask a friend or a book group to read the same book, and then meet to discuss it. Recommended books include *Redeeming Love* by Francine Rivers (a romance novel with themes from the biblical book of Hosea) and *Not For Sale* by David Batstone (addresses various forms of human trafficking and ministries that are responding with hope and compassion).
- **Read** Psalm 9. Consider what this psalm means to Christians today within the context of our response to the issue of human trafficking. What does it mean that “The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,” (verse 9), and what part do we play in creating a refuge for the oppressed?

- **Pray** that through the church, the Lord would be known by his justice, and the wicked be ensnared by the work of their hands (verse 16). Ask God what your part should be in this.

MONTH THREE: Get on board with AB Women’s Ministries’ mission project.

- **Learn** about American Baptist Women’s Ministries’ mission project “Break the Chains: Slavery in the 21st Century” by reviewing the information on the Break the Chains website at www.abwmbreakthechains.org. Make sure your congregation, both women and men, are aware of the project.
- **Note** the ministries that are receiving grants from the Break the Chains project, and pray for these ministry projects and those directing them.
- **Read** Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:16-21. How might these Scriptures direct our response to the issue of human trafficking?
- **Pray** that the hearts of people in American Baptist congregations will be touched by the Break the Chains project, and that they will give generously.

MONTH FOUR: Spend some time on the Web.

- **Review** informative material on other websites. For starters, you can use the links provided on AB Women’s Ministries Break the Chains website at www.abwmbreakthechains.org. Click on “What Can I Do?” to learn more about the issue of human trafficking.
- **Read** Psalm 140. In verse 12, what kind of justice does the Lord secure for the poor, and how does God uphold the cause of the needy?
- **Pray** that those oppressed in human trafficking will find comfort in knowing that God is mighty to save, and that God has a plan to bring justice and right the wrongs forever. Pray that God will show you how *you* can be involved.

MONTH FIVE: Watch a movie or a TV special feature on trafficking.

- Select a movie on human trafficking from the list provided under “What Can I Do?” on www.abwmbreakthechains.org, or check the television program schedule this month to find special feature programs dealing with trafficking or prostitution. Ask a friend to watch the movie or television program with you. How did the movie or program make you feel? Write a journal response.
- Read Psalm 82:3-4.
- Pray for Christians who have answered God’s call to reach out to those caught in human slavery around the world. Pray that God would protect them as they seek to rescue the weak and needy and deliver them from the hand of the wicked (verse 4).

MONTH SIX: Speak out in your church.

- **Write** an article for your church newsletter or ask your pastor if you can make a short presentation to the congregation about human trafficking.
- **Meet** with others in your church interested in engaging in the abolition of human trafficking together.
- **Read** Amos 5. This prophet’s words speak very strongly on God’s behalf. If we ignore the cries of those imprisoned, we fail to support the causes of justice in the

world. But if we heed God's voice, we will "let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream," (verse 24).

- **Pray** that in your church, people will respond to the plight of the oppressed, and will make a difference for the cause of justice in the world.

MONTH SEVEN: Gather a small group to watch a movie.

- **Invite** a few friends to view a movie with you and discuss it. Suggested movie: *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. The DVD is available at most movie rental stores and perhaps at your local library.
- **Share** what you have been learning about human trafficking.
- **Read** Job 24:9-12 and weep for children around the world still enslaved during the very moment in which you are reading this Scripture.
- **Pray** that some of your friends will catch the vision of doing something about this abominable situation in the world today. Ask God to lead you as you seek to do God's will.

MONTH EIGHT: Write to your legislators.

- **Investigate** legislation concerning human trafficking. Does your state have an anti-trafficking law? How does legislation treat victims of trafficking? ...their traffickers?
- **Read** Psalm 10. Based on what you read in this psalm, what do you think God's position on human trafficking is? What can we do to defend the fatherless and the oppressed?
- **Write** a letter to your congressman/woman expressing your concern and encouraging them to take action. To find their contact information, go to www.visi.com/juan/congress/index.html and enter your address in the spaces provided.
- **Pray** that God's people everywhere will hear the cries of the victims of human trafficking and rise up against their perpetrators, calling them to account (verse 15). Pray for our government leaders, that they will rise to the challenge of eradicating human trafficking and human slavery in our world today.

MONTH NINE: Get organized.

- **Make** a file of the resources you have found most helpful in learning about human trafficking. Your resource file could be placed in your church library so others can access it. If your church has a website, perhaps you can arrange to have these resources listed on their website.
- **Read** Matthew 25:31-46. Think about how this passage calls you to respond to the human trafficking situation in the world today. How does Jesus feel about "throwaway people"?
- **Pray** that God's people will hear these words Jesus taught and respond with mercy for "the least of these." Pray that as Christians we will not turn our backs on the least of these, who are also God's children.

MONTH TEN: Biblical fasting.

- **Ask** a small group of friends to study Isaiah 58 with you on what a true fast is. Afterwards, invite them to engage in a day of fasting “to loose the chains of injustice, set the oppressed free and break every yoke” (verse 6).
- **Read** Isaiah 58. What spiritual elements might you find in a fast that is acceptable to the Lord?
- **Pray** that the Holy Spirit will guide you in your preparation and in your fast.

MONTH ELEVEN: Engage your time.

- **Find** local social service agencies that deal with restoring victims of exploitation, such as shelters for battered women, Rescue & Restore Coalitions, or anti-trafficking coalitions or task forces. Ask if you can visit or volunteer to learn more.
- **Read** James 2:14-17. How does this passage speak to you?
- **Pray** that God will guide you to be the hands and feet of Christ in a hurting world.

MONTH TWELVE: Give.

- **Give** to American Baptist Women’s Ministries’ mission project Break the Chains, even if you have already given before. Send a donation as God leads you and include a note telling your concern and involvement in the issue of human trafficking.
- **Read** Micah 6:8. What has God shown you in this year of opening your mind and your heart to the tragedy of human trafficking? What is it that God is requiring of you? What will it mean now for you to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?
- **Pray** that God will lead you in the next step you should take and continue to mediate on what Micah 6:8 means in your life.
- **Reflect** on how God has changed your heart this year as you’ve used this Calendar of Caring.

The material for this Calendar of Caring was adapted with permission by Women Ministries of The Evangelical Covenant Church from their resource at <http://www.covchurch.org/uploads/Dn/DnJ6jEWsDj pduLrheD3IGO/HT-calendar-01-08.1.pdf>.