



The Christian origins of our Kiwi Cultural views on

SLAVERY

What made our society so free?

Note to group leader – to aid understanding:

Slavery is a difficult topic to study in the Bible. For younger audiences we recommend you give the following overview. The Bible seems to allow slavery in the Old Testament as a concession (allowance) in view of the brokenness of early feudal societies. There was an emphasis on treating slaves 'well' - but standards were well below what we follow today in the West. What we cannot see is how far these standards might have been *above what was happening elsewhere at that time*. The Bible might therefore represent a journey from times that were very-much worse than our own toward a better way of living. Even in Jesus' time an end to slavery was not a topic of discussion. Over half of all people in the Roman Empire were slaves. The question was therefore what God expects of Christians within a world where slavery does exist. The Christian community was a very small group – but it began to live out a belief in the equality of all people, and what happened as a result has changed our world!

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever been stuck doing something truly laborious and boring? Tell us about it?
- What do you know of modern slavery?

Today we are discussing our way through the fourth *Hope For All* booklet, titled **A BETTER WORLD**.
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THE BIBLE AND SLAVERY

What instructions were God's people given in regard to slavery?

- OLD TESTAMENT (Optional)
 - DEUTERONOMY 20:10-15 (Boundaries for war and slavery);
 - EXODUS 21:20, 26 (Treatment of slaves – punishment allowed but with boundaries);
 - DEUTERONOMY 24:18 (God's guidelines for how they treat slaves. I.e. Do to others as you would have them do to you)
 - Summary: In broken tribal and feudal society slavery was allowed. There are different types of slavery also. E.g. to pay debt instead of going to a prison for your crimes in which you would die.
- NEW TESTAMENT:
 - The New Testament affirmed the equality of all people – even though their various status' and positions were far from equal: **GALATIANS 3:28**; 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13
 - Because the Christian community was very small, and slavery was everywhere, the early Church focused on teaching believers how to behave well within the confines of this broken system: EPHESIANS 6:5-9. (For a fuller study: COLOSSIANS 3:22-25; 1 TIMOTHY 6:1-2; 1 PETER 2:18-21)

Comment:

- Paul esteemed the freeing of slaves where possible: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:21-24; PHILEMON 1-25
- These teachings were the spark that caused the fire (refer to group leader notes above).



FROM OUR HISTORY [REVISION OF CONTENT IN *HOPE FOR ALL – A BETTER WORLD*]

- From your reading of the *Hope for All* booklet, what percentage of the population were slaves in Rome and Athens during the Roman Empire?
- How was Jesus' treatment of the outcasts of society surprising in his time?
- How and why did New Testament Christians go on to help slaves and the poor?
- What is the name of the man best-known for the 'modern' abolition of Slavery in 1807, and what motivated him?
- What did Maori do with their slaves after accepting the Christian message as their own?
- What happened throughout New Zealand as a result of this release of slaves?
- How was the effort to get a treaty to protect Maori connected to the battle to stop slavery?
- While the Western world has battled historic slavery, why might there more slavery in the world today as compared to 200 years ago when so many nations have outlawed slavery?
- Without Jesus, is there any hint that slavery would ever have been challenged?

IN CONSIDERATION OF WHY CHRISTIANITY BRINGS GREATER FREEDOM AND HOPE THAN ALTERNATIVES [REVISION OF CONTENT IN THE *HOPE FOR ALL* BOOKLET]

- Why do people matter in the Christian way of seeing things? How is this different to the value of people according to other worldviews (religions / atheism)?
- How does Christianity give us a definition of right and wrong – and how is this different to the other worldviews (religions / atheism)?
- How does Christianity give a unique basis for believing good things can actually be achieved on Earth? What difference does this make?

APPLICATION

- In summary, what benefits spring from the Christian way of seeing things – as compared to the view that there is no God?
- What difference might this make to the way we behave and treat each other?
- In what ways does our whole society benefit today because of our various Christian ancestors?
- Any other thoughts?