



LAUNCHING JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

LIBBY SWENSON



One method – partnering with International Justice Mission

Modern-day slavery, human trafficking, forced prostitution. From the fourteen year-old girl in Southeast Asia who is sold into a brothel, to the widow in Africa whose home has been illegally taken and is forced into the streets with her children, to a man in South Asia whose entire family is forced to work in a brick kiln under brutal violence: these are stark realities of the oppression that millions of people created in the image of God suffer today. Realities that grieve the heart of God. Students of this generation (both Christian and non-Christian) are more aware of these injustices than any other generation before them. As a result, they want to be a part of helping to change the world in significant ways. They realize that the world does not have to be as it is; that people do not have to be enslaved, sold, beaten, abused and have their life, liberty and dignity taken away. Just as William Wilberforce, the British abolitionist, sacrificed his life to end the British slave trade in the 1800's, thousands of students want to eradicate world-wide slavery today; they are modern-day abolitionists.

So how can we as Cru Staff members respond? Is there a way that we can come alongside students and make disciples in such a way that injustices around

the world actually change? Is it possible to win students to Christ, build them up in their faith and send them out to change the world through justice movements? How can we work with organizations like International Justice Mission (IJM) to engage students in the reality that God is good, loves the poor, and seeks to bring rescue to the vulnerable? Can enslaved men, women and children experience freedom through the efforts of students?

Students today are not satisfied with a “proclamation-alone” ministry. They want to demonstrate the Gospel as well. In order to do this, Cru has unprecedented opportunity to partner with organizations that are experts in the realm of demonstration, like IJM.

A Horrifying Injustice: Human Trafficking and Modern-day Slavery:

- 27 million people are enslaved around the world (Free the Slaves)
- 2.2 million children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade each year (UNICEF)
- 600,000 to 800,000 children, women and men are trafficked across international borders annually; 14,500 to 17,500 into the US. (U.S. Dept of State)
- 80% of trafficking victims are female - 50% are minors (U.S. Dept of State)
- \$32 Billion – the total annual market value of human trafficking. It is tied with the illegal arms industry as the second largest criminal industry in the world (behind drug trafficking) and is the fastest growing.
- \$40,000 – the cost of one slave during the British slave trade in 1850. (Free the Slaves).
- \$30 – the cost of one slave today. (Free the Slaves)

Biblical Foundations for Justice



Justice is the mandate that all men, women and children that bear the image of God, have the ability to flourish among God's creation, to live without being abused, to exercise power and freedom in their lives. The Bible provides a very good description of God's perspective on justice, and the call to every Christian to seek justice. A few examples:

- Walking humbly with God, loving mercy, and doing justice are at the core of God's will for our lives. Micah 6:8
- "Loosening the chains of injustice" is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. Isaiah 58:6ff
- Seeking justice brings light, healing, and strength to our own lives. Isaiah 58:8ff
- God's clear command to His people is to seek justice, correct oppression, and bring justice to the vulnerable. Isaiah 1:17
- We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works. Eph. 2:8-10
- God's own announcements of His moral character proclaim that He is a God of mercy. Ex. 34:6-7 and a God who delights in justice. Jer. 9:24
- We are told to establish and maintain justice in society. Amos 5:15
- Believers are to share in the suffering of others. Hebrews 13:3
- Personal purity and a heart for the widow and orphan are expressions of pure and faultless religion that pleases God. James 1:27
- God loves justice. Ps. 11:7
- Doing justice brings joy to the righteous. Prov. 21:15

How can we at Cru become engaged in Justice Movements?

A justice movement is a groundswell of people who band together around the cause of injustice in order to bring about the beneficial change of justice. At Cru, we have the opportunity to work with International Justice Mission to grow justice movements among students. IJM is a Christian human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local officials to ensure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to promote functioning public justice systems.

Cru and IJM are working together to help bring awareness of the issues of injustice IJM confronts while introducing students to the God of justice. Cru will launch IJM campus movements alongside

Cru movements to help build bridges with students in a critical and relevant way and help Christian students to live out the Bible's call to seek justice. This work with IJM can support campus movements, summer projects, "Every Student Sent," and the Biblical development of students relative to God's heart for justice. Students are thirsty for this kind of engagement – which has a particular resonance in ethnic minority student contexts (EFM), where a foundation of passion for issues of justice often already exists.

How does IJM's work to combat violent oppression relate to Cru's mission of Turning Lost Students Into Christ-Centered Laborers? What does it have to do with Cru's DNA of Win, Build and Send?

It is not only Christian students who care about injustice. Non-Christian students are eagerly as passionate about the problem of injustice like modern-day slavery that IJM seeks to address. As Christians, we have an unprecedented opportunity to share God's love with students who are passionate about these issues, while also helping to support IJM's mission to bring freedom to those enslaved around the world.

Win – by launching IJM movements, students and Staff have easy and very relevant bridges to build with students who do not yet know Christ. We can all gather together with a common cause. The Cru team at Colorado State University had an incredible time of spiritual conversations when they used the Soularium cards during a human trafficking awareness week on campus. Instead of asking the regular Soularium questions, they changed them to these:

1. Which three cards do you think represent justice?
2. Which represent injustice?
3. Which card represents what you think God thinks about injustice?

A Staff member asserted that of all the years that he's been on Staff, this was by far the best day he's ever had on campus because engaging students in conversation was incredibly easy and significant.

Build – By helping our students learn how to demonstrate the Gospel while proclaiming it, we are training them for a lifetime of ministry. They will come to better understand Jesus' own ministry of proclamation and demonstration and have a better grasp on God's passion for justice. We are developing



whole disciples. In essence, we are not only helping students live out Ephesians 2:8-9, we are teaching them to practice verse 10 – that God created us to do good works.

Send – When a student learns about the realities of modern-day slavery, their lives will never be the same. There are many avenues of career and ministry that they can invest their lives in, and we can help send them out to the world to transform it.

Twenty-one lives saved through one student sent

Elisabeth,* a teenager in Southeast Asia, had just completed and was waiting for the results of her 10th grade exams. The oldest of 7 children in a devout Christian household, she had hopes of one day attending a Bible College. One day an older woman in a nearby village promised Elisabeth the opportunity to cross the border and to work in the city where she could make money to send back to her family. Though afraid to travel away from home, Elisabeth went with the woman who ultimately sold Elisabeth to a trafficker who sold her into a brothel. The brothel owner made it clear to Elisabeth that she now had to submit to repeated sexual assaults in order to pay back all of these debts.

For 3 months Elisabeth was able to resist the demands of the brothel owner, but finally, starved and beaten down by abuse and threats, Elisabeth succumbed to her circumstances.

Her first customer was a Westerner, and he paid \$500 to rape her, because she was a virgin. Elisabeth said that she wanted to die and that thoughts of suicide often entered into her mind. She tried to get other girls to pray with her, but they just laughed and taunted her, saying that her God could not hear her in here. But she never lost hope that her God would rescue her. Even in the midst of darkness and abuse, Elisabeth prayed to God, specifically asking Him to rescue her before her one-year anniversary in the brothel.

Thousands of miles across the ocean, someone else had also been praying. Sean received his undergraduate degree from Miami of Ohio where he was highly involved with Cru his entire college years. As a student, Sean felt the Lord leading him down the path to law school, so he enrolled in an elite law school and shortly after graduation began working for a top corporate law firm in Washington DC. After much

prayer, Sean heeded God's call to leave his position at his firm and to begin working as an attorney for IJM.

God then sent Sean to work for IJM Thailand among children sold into the horrors of forced prostitution. One of those operations led Sean to rescue Elisabeth out of that brothel where she was being brutalized and calling out to God for rescue.

Sean was able to bring her rescue, out of that hellhole and see her reunited with her family. In fact, God used Elisabeth to lead Sean and other IJM Staff to rescue another 20 girls from that dungeon.

And when Sean finally entered room #5 in that brothel where Elisabeth had been serially raped day after day, he discovered an amazing sight.

On the wall, Elisabeth had written the words of Psalm 27:1-3:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation-whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though and army besiege me, my heart will not fear, though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.”

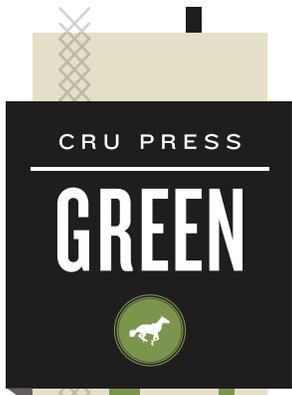
Elisabeth believed God would rescue her. God did in fact show up for her, and He showed up through Sean. Elisabeth spent months in recovery before returning to her family and eventually completing her degree. Even after the torture and abuse Elisabeth endured, she is a testimony to God's faithfulness, to His relentless love for the oppressed, and to His great desire to bring rescue from all forms of violent oppression.

Later when Elisabeth was asked by an IJM Staff member to read Psalm 27, she replied, “I don't want to read Psalm 27, I want to read Psalm 34 which says, ‘I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.’”

* A pseudonym

How To Get More Information

For more information about IJM and their ministry, you can go to www.ijm.org. If you would like to have an IJM Campus Chapter Toolkit or a Justice Week Toolkit (excellent tools for launching an IJM movement on your campus) sent to you, you may



contact Libby Swenson, Partnership Director for IJM/CRU at Libby.Swenson@uscm.org.

If you would like to lead a small group on justice, you can go to CruPress Green, and type “justice” into the search engine.