



WEEK 2 THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

This week, we recall the individuals that met Jesus on his journey to the cross. His mother, Mary, Simon, and Veronica become part of his story and help him in different ways.

CONSIDER... THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS



1. Jesus meets his mother
2. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross
3. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Mary, Simon and Veronica show practical care to Jesus in his darkest moment. In the same way, we have an opportunity to show compassion to those who are suffering in our communities.

Our individual and corporate response can make a massive difference in protecting vulnerable people from exploitation and noticing those who are already in the grip of slavery.



WATCH FIRST ENCOUNTERS



Film questions

- What struck you about Emma's story?
- What part does Emma's mother play in the journey and how does this echo Mary, the mother of Jesus', experience?



- How can churches and communities play a role in protecting vulnerable people from slavery? In the way of Simon and Veronica, what practical skills can we bring to the task of caring for and supporting those carrying the cross of modern slavery?
- Read John 3:1-17 (the Gospel reading for next Sunday). Nicodemus didn't understand Jesus' journey. For him, his religion was about miraculous signs and what he could know. He needed to learn that it was about being born again into a faith that enables Christ to bring light into the darkness. How can our witness move from what we think we know, to what we need to do, in the way of Mary, Veronica and Simon?



CONSIDER... THE CONTEMPORARY STATIONS OF THE CROSS



- What might it look like to show compassion to victims of modern slavery in your community?
- What is the first step? Who can you notice and reach out to in your neighbourhood?



One of the tragedies of our time, which allows modern slavery to thrive, is the collapse of neighbourhoods.

Bishop Alastair Redfern, Chair of The Clewer Initiative



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Right at the heart of any community is the church, which can act as a fantastic catalyst to mobilise the whole community to join together and tackle modern slavery.

Bill Crooks, artist and facilitator for The Clewer Initiative

PRAYER

Spend some time in silence recalling the film.

Our Father, help us to reflect the deep concern you have for every child, and to raise up all those journeys of suffering with which you continue to be involved. May our practices be always caring, our hearts never lose hope, and our desire become ever more focused upon responding to the cries of those being exploited, so that we may work tirelessly to bring healing and hope. We pray in your name and for your sake that this Spirit may live in us. Amen.



NEXT STEPS ON YOUR JOURNEY

Churches can play a key role in developing and strengthening community resilience. If “community resilience” is a new concept for you and you would like to find out more, the best thing to do is sign up for The Clewer Initiative’s Breaking County Lines or Hidden Voices courses. Both of these courses consider in greater detail how a community can respond to modern slavery.

- Sign up for our Breaking County Lines course
<https://theclewerinitiative.org/training-and-events/breaking-county-lines>
- Contact us about running a Hidden Voices course in your community
clewerinitiative@churchofengland.org



FURTHER READING FOR NEXT WEEK



What is community resilience?

In the film, we talk about community resilience. This can sound a bit technical, but in reality it is a way of describing Simon, Veronica and Mary's response on Jesus' journey to the cross. They step in to help their neighbour in need.

According to the dictionary, "community resilience is the sustained ability of communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity." The Clewer Initiative is founded on a community resilience approach – we believe that modern slavery can only be eliminated at a community level, where relationships are strong and where individuals look out for their neighbours' welfare.

Find out more about community resilience on our website - <https://theclewerinitiative.org/what-we-do/working-in-communities-1>

WHAT IS COUNTY LINES?

In the film, we hear the story of a girl drawn into county lines before her family can intervene. County lines involves the supply of illegal drugs from large urban areas to smaller cities, towns and provincial locations using dedicated mobile phones, known as deal lines, to take orders. Criminal gangs frequently target children and vulnerable adults to facilitate county lines - manipulating and coercing them into drug trafficking and distribution. Young women are sometimes specifically recruited because they are less likely to attract suspicion from law enforcement.



Community resilience can sound slightly jargony. In essence, it means creating communities that are aware and feel safe and include all their members.

Hilary Lines, Executive Team Coach and volunteer with The Clewer Initiative

VICTIMS OF COUNTY LINES REFERRED INTO THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM IN 2021

In 2021, **2,053** county lines referrals were flagged, a **23%** increase from 2020

The majority (**76%**) of these referrals were for male victims.



BREAKING COUNTY LINES

By strengthening relationships within a community, we can help discourage the presence of county lines activity. There are many different things we can do to build community resilience – all of them take time, effort and perseverance. On The Clewer Initiative’s Breaking County Lines course, we think in detail about county lines and practical steps communities can take to grow in resilience.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

In today’s film, we saw how modern slavery affects a whole family. Sometimes parents, grandparents, foster carers and teachers can be unaware that county lines gangs are targeting children in their midst. For this reason, we have developed a range of county lines seminars for different groups.

<https://theclewerinitiative.org/training-and-events/breaking-county-lines>



As human beings, we tend to form cliques and love to be in the “in crowd.” We often don't look across what can be quite a wide chasm. Sadly, human beings have always had the capacity to penetrate and exploit these gaps. If we are to tackle modern slavery in our communities, we must build bridges across these gaps and prevent them getting wider.

Hilary Lines, Executive Team Coach and volunteer with The Clewer Initiative



ROB'S JOURNEY

Rob has been working for The Clewer Initiative for the last year as a part-time trainer and facilitator. He has developed some of our county lines resources and was recently asked to use them in a totally new and challenging setting.

The senior management team at a local primary school knew of Rob's modern slavery work and asked him for help when they became concerned about four young boys who were involved in county lines.

Rob explains: "When I'm not working for The Clewer Initiative, I am a creative education specialist using art to get alongside vulnerable children. The staff at one of the schools I work in was worried about four boys who were at extreme risk of expulsion. The staff, social services and police believed that keeping the children in school was the best place for them because if they were expelled or sent to a Pupil Referral Unit, it would only lead them further into the criminal world they were already a part of. As I knew the children through the art work I had been doing in the school, I was asked to adapt The Clewer Initiative's existing county lines material and use it to educate the boys about the dangers of county lines and begin the long work of showing them they have choices.

"I am spending time with each boy, one -to-one, thinking about how you know who to trust; how county lines drug gangs operate; how the senior gang members are benefitting from their involvement and where it might lead in the long run.

"The children face huge pressure to work for the gang, delivering drugs, and it is hard for them to imagine any other life. I am hoping that by working together over an extended period, the children may begin to see that there are other options and know who to turn to and trust if they want to talk.

"As I work with these children, I am convinced more and more that early intervention is key. Once children are embedded in a county lines gang, it is extremely hard for them to leave. It is so important we give children the tools to resist county lines before they get groomed and manipulated. The Clewer Initiative has such brilliant resources for primary and secondary aged children and it is critical we get them into the hands of teachers, carers and social workers to help them in the vital work of caring for, supporting and equipping vulnerable children to avoid county lines."